

Exploring Self-Gifting Behaviour in Individuals
Setting Physical Goals

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Abstract

The concepts of self-gifting and goal setting are combined in the context of physical activity, in order to investigate their impact on the likelihood to self-gift when setting physical goals. Mick and DeMoss' original work on self-gifting is explored further in this investigation, with the utilisation of an exploratory, qualitative approach. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with women setting physical goals related to running, with findings from thematic analysis showing support for new concepts in this area. This includes the provision of new themes, namely 'Pre-gifting' (gifts purchased before goal outcome) and 'Tools of the Trade' (related to how items differ in significance between individuals). Seemingly, physical activities relate strongly to reward orientation in self-gifting behaviour, thus a conceptual model of self-gifting likelihood in a reward context in relation to the goal setting process is contributed. This is inclusive of the themes that emerge as influential on this process, showing the times at which self-gifting opportunities arise as individuals move through the goal setting process to eventual goal success, and the factors that influence this outcome. Consequently, areas are outlined that require further investigation, and a discussion of this concludes the chapters.

Keywords: self-gifting, goal setting, achievement, reward, gift giving, physical activity

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Chapter 1: Introduction

“A gift consists not in what is done or given, but in the intention of the giver or doer.”

Seneca and Basore (1958)

1.1 Overview

Gifting behaviour is embedded in our society (Ward & Tran, 2008), and further, a phenomenon known as self-gifting provides a way for people to communicate with themselves, expressing self-regard, self-esteem, and identity (Kauppinen-Räsänen et al., 2014). It is proving popular – in 2013, self-gifting was projected to have the highest participation rates yet at 59% of shoppers (National Retail Federation, 2012). Where interpersonal gift-giving stimulates communication between a giver and a receiver, embodying both roles (through self-gifting) allows individuals a range of behavioural options that are becoming more common (Mick & DeMoss, 1990a, 1990b; Mick, DeMoss, & Faber, 1992). Self-gifting is a hedonic form of consumption that is distinctive because of the motivational contexts (e.g. Mick and DeMoss 1990a) in which it occurs (Heath, Tynan, & Ennew, 2011).

As outlined by Mick and DeMoss (1990b), self-gifting indulgences justified by effortful behaviour and performance behaviour are propelled by self-bargains for indulgences. Taken literally, this relates to self-gifting as motivation as well as a justified activity, post achievement. Some research around the area exists, however it has previously been largely overlooked, with Heath et al. (2011) suggesting that more qualitative and interpretative methodological approaches to develop the theory and understanding of self-gifts should be undertaken. Previous findings show that the two main contexts that self-gifts occur within are reward and therapy (Mick & DeMoss, 1990b), and as a result, self-gifts can be a way of a rewarding oneself for an accomplishment (Mick, 1991). Moreover, self-gifts are perceived to be earned (Kivetz & Simonson, 2002) after ‘personal effort and achievement’ (Mick and DeMoss 1990b, pg. 326). Kivetz and Simonson (2002) illustrate several self-gift experiences of this nature, such as finishing a race, completing an assignment or attaining a high exam grade. In this way, self-gifts relate to goal setting in that accomplishments are a key factor, as

is the context of reward for a job well done, or a gift in the therapy context as consolation for not achieving set goals.

Physical activity goals are an obvious context in which goal setting, goal attempt and subsequent self-gift behaviour may occur. As yet, however, no research exists combining the topics of self-gifting and goal setting in a context where individuals are setting physical goals. Gift-gifting in itself is an important topic, and for good reason - recent research suggests that consumers are spending more than USD\$500 billion on gifts, with gifting representing 10% of the total retail market (The Motley Fool, 2014; Unity Marketing, 2012). Further, physical activity is an important area of investigation considering the epidemic-like trend obesity is becoming globally (Health, 2014; Sturm & Hattori, 2013) and the way in which exercise is touted as a way to decrease this growing concern (American College of Sports Medicine, 2013; Chaput et al., 2010). Thus, this research marries the phenomenon of self-gifting with goal setting in the context of physical activity, utilising an exploratory qualitative approach.

1.2 Background to Research

The researcher's interest in this area was piqued initially through working at and observing customer's purchase behaviour at a premium sportswear store, where women would frequently purchase entire outfits they thought were 'out of the budget', because they perceived they 'deserve it'. Investigating consumer motivation is important, because motivation studies provide the basis for understanding consumer behaviour (Kauppinen-Räsänen et al., 2014). While most of the self-gifting related studies undertaken so far have attempted to understand those contexts that motivate self-gifting (Heath et al., 2011), the relationship of self-gifting to goal setting is yet to be properly addressed.

Self-gifting was first conceptualised by Mick and DeMoss (Faure & Mick, 1993; Mick, 1996; Mick & DeMoss, 1990a, 1990b, 1992; Mick & Faure, 1998), with earlier research efforts (e.g. Sherry (1983), further contributing to our understanding of gift-giving as a whole. In essence, their work builds upon theories around gifting and their transfer to a monadic rather than dyadic relationship of gift-giving. Mick and DeMoss (1990a) define self-gifting as "personally symbolic self-communication through special indulgences that tend to be

premeditated and highly context bound” (pg. 322). This definition came after investigation into what set self-gifting apart from regular interpersonal gift giving. Research found these concepts differ to the largest degree on three factors; communication, exchange and specialness (Mick & DeMoss, 1990b). In terms of communication, the difference lies in the transfer of symbolic messages between giver and receiver versus personal communication of self-esteem and identity. Exchange relates to obligations felt to give, receive and repay in comparison to the feeling of deserving of indulgences, with specialness differing based on extra meaningfulness facilitated via sacredness as opposed to uncommonness or the ‘perfect gift’ (Mick & DeMoss, 1990b). In this way, self-gifts take on a different nature and role than interpersonal gifts.

The seminal authors placed further significance on context when describing the phenomenology of self-gifts (Mick & DeMoss, 1990a). From this, as mentioned, personal accomplishment (reward) and therapy were the top two contexts for inducing self-gifting consumer behaviour (SGCB), with others including having extra money, being on holiday, or desiring the attainment of a goal. Howland (2010) surmises that self-gifting shadows the post-industrial regimes of commodity economics and interpersonal gifting, casting the individual as an exemplary free agent. In this way, individuals are free of the normative bonds of dyadic gift-giving and can gift themselves with reckless abandon. What drives this concept has been investigated through the lens of attribution theory, with findings showing that causal attributions can lead to self-gift behaviour either by cognitive or affective routes (Faure & Mick, 1993). This was further elaborated on by Mick and Faure (1993) who emphasised the importance of emotions and attributions on self-gift likelihood. The authors continued this line of research, utilising an experimental methodology when the majority of research had been descriptive or exploratory. It was found that self-gifts are more likely following successes; however, depending on whether the attribution is to an internal versus external cause, the levels of self-gift likelihood within successful and failed contexts are reversed, for example the purchase of a consolation gift rather than a reward. Happiness, pride, confidence, and deservingness mediated a substantial amount of these effects (Mick & Faure, 1998).

More recent studies seek to examine how motives to purchase self-gifts might influence the consumer–brand relationship, and show that consumers have more positive brand evaluations

when motives are present than when they are absent (Carnevale, Yucel-Aybat, & Block, 2014). Self-gifting has been used as a sales strategy before, notably in the recognisable L'Oreal ads espousing their message "Because you're worth it" (L'Oreal Paris, 2014). Further, the United Kingdom luxury store Harvey Nichols utilised a similar advertising campaign, named 'Sorry, I Spent it on Myself' in which family members give small, unusual, Harvey Nichols branded Christmas gifts. A mother dressed in a £4,000 Lanvin dress gifts her disappointed son a sink plug (Sowray, 2013). It is apparent that their lacklustre gifts are due to overspending on expensive items for themselves.

Related to achievement and thus reward, goal setting is a topic that has been strenuously and methodically researched in the past, generally in relation to task performance and motivation in an organisational setting (Bryan & Locke, 1967; Elliot & Harackiewicz, 1994; Erez & Judge, 2001; Locke & Latham, 2002; Locke, Shaw, Saari, & Latham, 1981). As mentioned, there is a relationship between goal setting and self-gifting, due in part to the achievement and reward context that features heavily as an influential factor on SGCB. Further, the combination of goal setting and self-gifting is yet to be explored in a variety of contexts. Thus, for these reasons, investigation into these areas was undertaken.

1.3 Description of the Research Process

As mentioned previously, a qualitative, exploratory study was selected, in keeping with the intention of the research and the nature of previous studies. The following research questions were developed in order to work towards the aim of uncovering insight into this unknown context. They were developed due to the uncertainty around how the context would relate to self-gifting consumer behaviour and aided the focus and structure of the research, providing guidelines for investigation:

1. Does goal setting and goal attempt have any influence over individuals' likelihood to self-gift?
2. Does the nature of the goal have any influence over self-gifting behaviour?
3. Does goal commitment and importance have any impact on individuals' self-gifting behaviour?

The combination of research questions is provided in order to encompass a well-rounded, exploratory investigation into these areas. The intention is that these questions will guide research methodology and method selection in order to provide the most accurate, rich and descriptive findings.

Subsequently, semi-structured interviews were undertaken with fourteen women from a local running group's Get Up To Five program, where individuals run five kilometres for the first time over an eight week period. More experienced runners from the same club were also interviewed in order to gain insight from those with a variety of ability levels. After transcription, thematic analysis was utilised with the provision of codes and then themes, before further grouping, and then completing the thesis as a whole. The findings of the research are presented in Chapter Four, and include new findings such as the concept of 'Pre-gifting', where individuals gift themselves prior to starting a goal, and how the influence of ability and/or experience level can alter purchase intentions and justification methods.

1.4 Structure of the Thesis

Overall, the structure of the thesis is divided by chapter. Chapter One sought to introduce the topic, as well as acknowledge those authors who have been such an integral part of this research area. The second chapter revolves around a thorough discussion of the literature, encompassing the topics of goal setting, gift-giving, self-gifting, and models of these processes. Reviewing the literature highlighted gaps in these areas, namely context as previously mentioned, and the link between goal setting and self-gifting. These areas helped to guide the topic selection and method of investigation. To broaden the knowledge base of the context, further information is provided regarding motivation and performance in the physical realm. Goal setting is discussed in terms of the accomplishment of goals, as well as motivation for task performance in a variety of settings. Chapter Three aims to relay the method of investigation that the thesis took. Findings from the interviews are discussed in Chapter Four, where themes are presented before Chapter Five provides a discussion of key themes, how they relate to prior literature, and new insights gained from the study. Finally, areas for further research are included, as well as the limitations of this study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The following chapter aims to give an overall view of the three main topic areas which inform this thesis. The importance here lies with the interrelation between these areas, as this is the way in which insight will be gained. With the performance of self-gifting behaviour linked to reward for an accomplishment as well as consolation for failure, goal setting relates in a way that provides milestones for each achievement, and the context for SGCB to occur. Information about behaviour in the context of physical activity and whether physical activity relates at all to SGCB and goal setting will also be explored. Further, with the rising levels of obesity seen across the globe (Health, 2014; Sturm & Hattori, 2013), motivation for physical activity takes on a new level of importance.

The following review covers each topic - goal setting, interpersonal gift-giving as an overall process and self-gifting as a specific phenomenon, as well as a discussion on the selection of the physical activity context. While self-gifting is a relatively new topic, goal setting has enjoyed diverse research undertakings across a variety of contexts, with wide-ranging applications. As well as being subject to change through the decades, research on gift-giving has further been conducted across multiple disciplines including anthropological, sociological, consumer behaviour and psychological areas of research. It is imperative that a thorough grounding in the literature is provided, and that the connection between these areas is understood. It is hoped that the literature review presented in this chapter gives a well-rounded approach to these concepts, outlines their function and gives greater understanding to the context surrounding the exploratory study at hand.

2.2 Goal Setting

A goal is defined simply as what the individual is consciously trying to do (Latham & Yukl, 1975), and much of consumer behaviour is goal-directed (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 1999). There is a vast amount of research on goal setting and the concepts this encompasses, such as task performance (Locke & Latham, 2002; Locke et al., 1981) and motivation (Bryan & Locke, 1967; Elliot & Harackiewicz, 1994; Erez & Judge, 2001; Locke, 1996). However, Wofford,

Goodwin, and Premack (1992) noted that despite the interest in goal setting as a topic, a lack of relevant theoretical basis in the area existed. Since this statement was published multiple models have emerged, inclusive of Bagozzi and Dholakia's (1999) model of goal setting and goal pursuit in consumer behaviour, encompassing six sections organised in a feedback loop. These include; goal setting, formation of a goal intention, action planning, action initiation and control, goal attainment/failure and feedback reactions. This process is relatively logical, drawing upon how goals can be internally or externally activated, either by external stimulants or contextually presented opportunities, compared with internal activation where the individual can choose between self-generated alternatives (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 1999).

Further models include Locke and Latham's (2002) goal setting theory in the context of high-performance (Figure 1). Performance, as well as antecedents and consequences of goal setting make up further aspects of the model. This demonstrates the cyclical nature of goal setting rather than as a process where an end point is reached and the process concludes. In a literal sense, a goal may be subject to change at the point of achievement, rather than ending at an infinite point. In this way, goals are subject to change based on a variety of factors, inclusive of goal commitment, self-efficacy, feedback, effort and satisfaction.

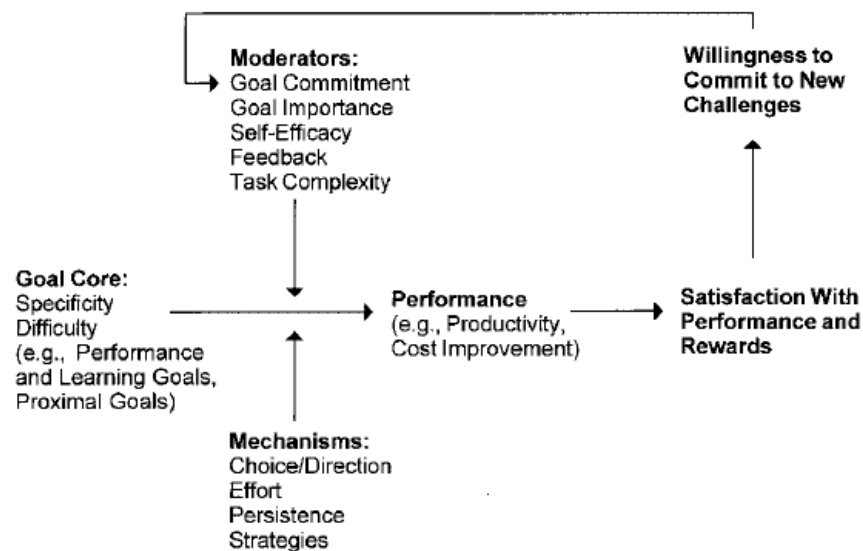


Figure 1: *Essential Elements of Goal-Setting Theory and the High-Performance Cycle (Locke & Latham, 2002)*

This concept is echoed by Bagozzi and Dholakia (1999) who contribute a model of goal setting and goal pursuit in consumer behaviour, in line with Locke and Latham (2002) model in that there is a feedback process after goal attainment or failure. This model, however, does not include other mechanisms and moderators. Thus, it becomes clear that goal setting is a process heavily influenced by a wide ranging number of factors.

2.2.1 Performance and Motivation

While the goal setting process is open to influence from various factors, the utilisation of goal setting as a motivational technique for enhancing task performance is one of the most thoroughly researched areas in the management and organizational behaviour literatures (Mento, Steel, & Karren, 1987). Reviews and meta-analyses have shown that goal setting theory is among the most scientifically valid and useful theories in organisational science (Locke, Latham, & Erez, 1988). Main findings related to goal oriented research are from Locke; Locke and Latham (2002), Locke et al. (1981) and Locke, Frederick, Lee, and Bobko (1984). Further research also alternates between laboratory and field settings.

As one of the founders in this area, Locke (1968) lists his conclusions related to goal setting research. Importantly, these statements have been upheld in more recent literature. They include the notion that hard goals produce a higher level of performance (output) than easy goals, and that in particular, specific hard goals produce a higher level of output than a goal of "do your best" (Locke, 1968). This is a logical concept, as those that have set specific hard goals are likely to be more committed to the outcome of their attempt. Further, behavioural intentions regulate choice behaviour. This relates to how behavioural intentions were found to mediate the effects of money and 'verbal reinforcement' on choice behaviour (Locke, 1968, pg. 157). The list of findings was updated by Locke and Latham (1985) to include more specified statements regarding how specific, difficult goals lead to better performance than vague or easy goals. This is furthered by the statement that short-term goals can facilitate the achievement of long-term goals, due in part to the fact that goals affect performance by affecting effort, persistence, and direction of attention, and by motivating strategy development (Locke & Latham, 1985). Short term goals as a way of attaining and adhering to longer term goals can be likened to a piecemeal process where individual steps are taken in order to achieve the overall goal. Additionally, feedback regarding progress is

necessary for goal setting to work which can be utilised at the set times implicated by the resolution of short term goals. Locke and Latham's (1985) final addition is that goals must be accepted if they are to affect performance. Specifically, this relates to goals set by organisations rather than individuals as logically those set yourself are more personally oriented and hold stronger individual importance.

To expand further on hard goals, the concept suggests that if goals regulate performance, then hard goals should produce a higher level of performance than easy goals, other things (such as ability) being equal (Locke, 1968). Locke et al. (1981) also state that 96% of the studies (both laboratory and field) supported the goal specificity/difficulty hypothesis. These findings have been confirmed in a range of other studies since publication (Locke & Latham, 2002; Locke et al., 1981; Mento et al., 1987), due in part to the fact that goal difficulty and goal specificity/difficulty performance effects appear stable across the type of study (e.g. experimental or correlational), the types of subjects (e.g. educational level) and differing feedback and incentive conditions (Mento et al., 1987). While there have been some concerns about validity raised, as some of Locke's theorems are based primarily on a series of well-controlled laboratory experiments with college students who performed relatively simple tasks (e.g. adding numbers) for short periods of time (Latham & Yukl, 1975), generally these statements hold under wider investigation. Thus, it can be expected that hard goals lead to a higher level of performance, related to motivation and goal importance for individuals.

Support for research on specific goals has also been found. This area was investigated by Latham and Yukl (1975), and of eleven studies of organisations examining the effects of setting specific goals, ten of these studies showed evidence in support of setting specific goals, although some possible limiting conditions were discovered. The positive outcomes of setting specific goals have been shown in a range of settings, including educational performance. For example, students that set goals displayed significant improvements in academic performance comparative to those that did not (Morisano, Hirsh, Peterson, Pihl, & Shore, 2010). Morisano et al. (2010) went to further explain that explicitly setting goals can markedly improve performance at any given task, describing how individuals with clear goals appear more able to direct attention and effort toward goal-relevant activities and away from goal-irrelevant activities, demonstrating a greater capacity for self-regulation. Further, well-

defined goals appear to help individuals discover and use ever more efficient strategies and modes of thought and perception (Locke & Latham, 2002; Locke et al., 1981; Morisano et al., 2010)

As mentioned, feedback on goal progress is important for achievement. Perceived goal progress could act as a catalyst for increased feelings of well-being (Morisano et al., 2010) and ‘knowledge of results’ has been found to lead to an increase in effort and performance for at least four different reasons. These include: (a) feedback may induce a person who previously did not have specific goals to set a goal to improve performance by a certain amount; (b) feedback may induce a person to raise their goal level after attaining a previous goal; (c) feedback that informs a person that their current level of effort is insufficient to attain their goal may result in greater effort; and (d) feedback may inform a person of ways in which to improve their methods of performing the task (Latham & Yukl, 1975). It is clear that this is a requirement of goal achievement, but also goal attempt as feedback relates to motivation. Thus, goal setting only works if there is timely feedback showing performance or progress in relation to the goal (Locke et al., 1981).

Finally, a number of personality variables have also been postulated to moderate the effects of goals on performance (e.g., achievement orientation, locus of control, and self-esteem), but the empirical yield has been disappointing (Locke & Latham, 1990). Further, monetary incentives on performance have had varying outcomes, mostly dependent on context (Locke, 1968).

2.2.2 Goal Commitment

The goal–performance relationship is strongest when people are committed to their goals (Locke & Latham, 2002). Within goal theory, goal commitment has been identified as an essential condition (Klein, Wesson, Hollenbeck, Wright, & DeShon, 2001) and a critical construct in understanding the relationship between goals and performance (Klein, Wesson, Hollenbeck, & Alge, 1999). Locke et al. (1981) recognised that if there is no commitment, a goal can have no motivational effect. In a literal sense, this is logical – individuals do not bother with things they do not care about or without fear a negative outcome. It is virtually axiomatic that if there is no commitment to goals, then goal setting does not work (Locke et

al., 1988) Although research around this topic has been somewhat stilted, the primary consequence of goal commitment is moderation of the relationship between goal difficulty and performance (Klein et al., 1999). This is linked to the overall findings around specific, difficult goals leading to higher levels of performance, relative to vague or easy goals, as higher levels of effort occurred when the task was moderately difficult, and the lowest levels occurred when the task was either very easy or very hard (Klein et al., 1999; Locke & Latham, 2002). Commitment to goals is important for motivation and adherence, both essential aspects when working toward specific, hard goals.

Research has also repeatedly demonstrated that the external provision of goals for performance (task-specific standards) improves performance (Elliot & Harackiewicz, 1994). This is important in an organisational context, as goals are often set for employees as opposed to being set personally. Goal acceptance is a type of commitment specific to a goal which is assigned (Locke et al., 1981). Goals are central to current treatments of work motivation, and goal commitment is a necessary condition for difficult goals to result in higher task performance (Klein et al., 1999). Further, self-efficacy enhances goal commitment. (Locke & Latham, 2002), a concept linked closely to goal achievement.

2.2.3 Self-efficacy and Social Cognitive Theory

Bandura (1977) states that people process, weigh, and integrate diverse sources of information concerning their capability, and they regulate their choice of behaviour and effort expenditure accordingly. This relates to self-efficacy, the belief that one can perform a novel or difficult task, or cope with adversity in various domains of human functioning (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995). Locke and Latham's model (2002) listed self-efficacy as a moderator of goal achievement, although self-efficacy is important when discussing goal achievement, motivation, and general self-belief. This is because perceived self-efficacy helps to account for such diverse phenomena as changes in coping behaviour produced by different modes of influence, level of physiological stress reactions, self-regulation of refractory behaviour, resignation and despondency to failure experiences, self-debilitating effects of proxy control and illusory inefficaciousness, achievement strivings, growth of intrinsic interest, and career pursuits (Bandura, 1982) as well as facilitating goal-setting, effort investment, persistence in face of barriers and recovery from setbacks (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995).

While a vast majority of research on self-efficacy was carried out many years ago, theories have been supported and there have been further developments in more recent times. The overwhelming majority of research has found positive relationships between self-efficacy and performance (Sitzmann & Yeo, 2013). In a different context, a meta-analysis of the relationship between perceived self-efficacy with respect to academic subjects and achievements showed that self-efficacy appraisals make a positive contribution to academic achievements (Multon, Brown, & Lent, 1991), while self-efficacy is seen as an antecedent of achievement goals which affect achievement behaviour indirectly, via achievement goal adoption. For example, previous research has shown that self-efficacy predicts both mastery- and performance-approach goals, but not performance-avoidance goals (Diseth, 2011). Bandura (1986) states that self-efficacy specific to a given activity domain is most instrumental in predicting performance in that domain, and that people avoid activities that they believe exceed their coping capabilities, but they undertake and perform assuredly those that they judge themselves capable of managing (Bandura, 1982). Further, because acting on misjudgements of personal efficacy can produce adverse consequences, accurate appraisal of one's own capabilities has considerable functional value (Bandura, 1982). In this way, this depth of knowledge can be used to gather an understanding of self-efficacy and its potential outcomes.

Generally, when beset with difficulties, people who entertain serious doubts about their capabilities slacken their efforts or give up altogether, whereas those who have a strong sense of efficacy exert greater effort to master the challenges. Perseverance usually produces high performance attainments (Bandura, 1982). This also relates to the improved performance standards on harder goals, and how this was linked to increased performance comparative to easy or 'do your best' goals (Locke, 1968). Further, Bandura (1977) found that self-efficacy derived from partial enactive mastery during the course of treatment in his research predicted performance on stressful tasks; this mastery was linked to improved performance. Logically, in terms of tasks never performed before, feedback becomes important in assessing your own ability. When feedback is given in relation to a standard, individuals evaluate their own performance and this motivates further action (Bandura, 1977). If the feedback shows performance to be at or above the level of the goal, the individual evaluates his or her performance positively and is motivated to maintain the level of effort. Further improvements in performance would require that the goal be raised, since a goal that has been achieved will

no longer be challenging. Goals represent concrete standards for performance evaluation, and the successful attainment of such standards can enhance competence perceptions (Elliot & Harackiewicz, 1994).

Goal-setting theory is fully consistent with Social Cognitive Theory in that both acknowledge the importance of conscious goals and self-efficacy, and motivation depends largely on goal setting (Locke & Latham, 1985). Social Cognitive Theory is a concept that has been discussed across studies of goal setting. From a social cognitive perspective, self-regulated learners direct their learning processes and attainments by setting challenging goals for themselves, by applying appropriate strategies to achieve their goals, and by enlisting self-regulative influences that motivate and guide their efforts (Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Pons, 1992). Social Cognitive Theory subscribes to a model of emergent interactive agency (Bandura, 1986), where persons are neither autonomous agents nor simply mechanical conveyers of animating environmental influences. Rather, they make causal contribution to their own motivation and action within a system of triadic reciprocal causation (Bandura, 1989). More recent research states that Social Cognitive Theory addresses the growing primacy of the symbolic environment and the expanded opportunities it affords people to exercise greater influence in how they communicate, educate themselves, carry out their work, relate to each other, and conduct their business and daily affairs (Bandura, 2002). Further developments highlight the importance of not just self-efficacy, but resilient self-efficacy, particularly in regard to goal commitment and adherence. Resilient self-efficacy requires experience in overcoming obstacles through perseverant effort. Resilience is also built by learning how to manage failure so that it is informative rather than demoralizing (Bandura, 2012). In this way, self-efficacy and Social Cognitive Theory weigh heavily on how individuals go about setting and achieving goals.

It is clear that the goal setting process is heavily influenced by a range of factors, with varying degrees of importance. What is relevant in this context is the importance of feedback on goal setting, the impact of easy/difficult goals on performance, and how goal importance and commitment relate to motivation and performance outcomes. These well-researched sentiments are imperative for shaping the theory behind goal setting, and analysing the importance of certain factors in later chapters. This is particularly important given the

combination of goal setting and gift-giving in the research. Understanding the process of goal setting inclusive of motivation and influential factors means the topic of gift giving is better understood overall.

2.3 Gift-Giving

Interpersonal gift-giving can be appreciated by the vast majority of the population; its occurrence straddles cultures, age, and other demographics. Just as retail shopping in general contributes greatly to the economy, gift shopping drives a substantial portion of all retail sales (Holstein, Benjamin, McDonald, Streisand, & Jones Yang, 2000). In 2006, the typical American family spent around USD\$4,000 on gift purchases (Babin, Gonzalez, & Watts, 2007) and the Christmas period of heavy expenditure continues to rise. A survey by Dutch bank ING (2014) reported that the British intended to spend an average of €440 each (£350) on Christmas gifts – 47% more than the next biggest spenders in France and Luxembourg (€300), placing them at the top of the United Nations (ING, 2014). A press release from Verdict (2014), a British retail data analysis company, estimated that in 2014 £2.3bn extra will be spent compared to 2013, a rise of 2.6% – reaching a £90.7 billion total Christmas expenditure (Verdict, 2014). Even beyond occasions such as Christmas, from the Deloitte European spending survey for the year ending 2014, of the predicted household budget 61% was allocated to purchasing gifts (Deloitte, 2014).

With diverse applications and at times, significant financial impact, research has been implemented across multiple disciplines including anthropological, sociological, consumer behaviour and psychological areas of research. Gifts themselves have been defined as a good or service (including the givers time, activities, and ideas) voluntarily provided to another person or group (Belk & Coon, 1993). Virtually any resource, whether tangible or intangible, can be transformed into a gift through the vehicles of social relationships and giving occasions (Sherry, 1983) In recent years, literature around gift-giving as a general process has broadened in scope, with research on multiple facets of what has been found to be a complex process. This includes the new concept of regifting (Adams, Flynn, & Norton, 2012; Swilley, Cowart, & Flynn, 2014), gift-giving as a way of managing impressions (Segev, Shoham, & Ruvio, 2012, 2013), different types of gifts (Clarke, 2006; 2007), brand influence on gift-giving and consumption (Parsons, 2002) as well as when gifts go wrong (Sherry, McGrath, &

Levy, 1992; 1993). In essence, the act of interpersonal gift-giving is the giving of a gift to another, although there is debate around motivations for engaging in this process and whether or not this is an exchange or a purely altruistic activity.

Mauss (1954), the founder of much early work on gifting, concluded that gift-giving is a self-perpetuating system of reciprocity, with three obligations, namely the obligations to give, receive and to repay (Belk, 1976). Mauss (1954) concludes his earlier work with the now widely accepted conclusion that reciprocity motivates gift-giving (Belk & Coon, 1993). As an exchange, be it social, economic or other, gift-giving involves a process that consumers move through. This notion has held in many works, and is widely accepted by authors on the topic. Motivations for gifting differ between groups (Wolfenbarger, 1990), however gifting has previously been promoted as a way to assert 'norms' of giving, social responsibility, and reciprocity (Caplow, 1982, 1984) as well as an opportunity to express the giver's perception of both him or herself and the receiver (Wolfenbarger, 1990). Wolfenbarger (1990) describes this concept as complex movements in the management of meaning. In this way, insight into the complex nature of gifting is given - something that goes far beyond a physical act of giving. Mick and DeMoss (1990a) further this, stating that the most common form and function of gift-giving, is an interpersonal act of symbolic communication, with explicit and implicit meanings ranging from congratulations, love, and regret to obligation and dominance. Motivation for gift-giving is discussed below; however the actual motivation behind gift-giving is hotly debated.

Mauss' (1954) statements regarding reciprocity discuss how the obligation to give may be based on moral or religious imperatives, the need to recognise and maintain a status hierarchy, the need to establish or maintain peaceful relations, or simply the expectation of reciprocal giving (Belk, 1976). This echoes the 'give, receive and repay' process espoused earlier. However, Belk and Coon (1993) propose an alternate theorem in juxtaposition to the idea that all giving is to get something in return, an alternative paradigm based on the idea of 'agapic' love, where a 'non-exchange' occurs, valorising expressive altruistic gifts that reveal and celebrate powerful emotions. The simple concept is a continuum, wherein pure gift and total reciprocation are at opposite ends of the spectrum, and actions can fall on part of the

spectrum dependent on a variety of likely situational factors. Be it social, economic or other, gift-giving involves a process that consumers move through.

2.3.1 The Process of Gift-Giving

First conceptualised by Sherry (1983), the process of gift-giving was interpreted in an anthropological manner. The model outlines three stages of the process, namely Gestation, Prestation, and Reformulation. The gestation period includes antecedents and motivations of gift giving context, cultural impact and the influence of special occasions. Much research has been done in this area, across a varying time frame, which leads to broader and sometimes more specific insight into this stage of the process. Prestation is the stage where the actual giving of the gift occurs. At this stage, both donor and recipient are attentive to the time, place, and mode of transaction: ritual or ceremonial ambience may heighten the impact of the giving, or increase the value of the gift (Sherry, 1983). Finally, Reformulation is the stage encompassing gift disposition and realignment of the giver/recipient relationship (Babin et al., 2007; Parsons, 2002; Rynning, 2001; Segev et al., 2012; Sherry, 1983). Ruth, Otnes, and Brunel (1999) state that this model “remains the most comprehensive framework for understanding gift-exchange processes” (p. 385), evidence of its acceptance and status as the premier model of gift-giving behaviour (Clarke, 2008).

The beginning of the gift-giving process, gestation is most thoroughly researched, and includes motivation for engaging in such behaviour. The notion that gift-giving can be a reflection of the self relates to the communication aspect that the gift offers, as well as how the recipient adjusts to the self-perception the donor is imparting on them. In this way, when deciding on what and who to gift, communication is an important part of the process to be considered. Gift selection may be affected by the information which it would appear to convey about the giver and the giver-recipient relationship (Belk, 1976). Gifts portray key aspects of a person's individuality, and help narrate the development of a person's life story (Kleine, Kleine, & Allen, 1995). Differences in decision outcomes and information sources when a product is purchased as a gift rather than for personal use are a powerful statement of the giver's perception of the recipient (Schwartz, 1967). Thus, gift-giving can be utilised as a tool to manage relationships, self and others perceptions, state and influence relational bonds, and convey meaning. It has even been suggested that the giving of gifts can be used as a

means to sever a relationship when the giver actively selects something unappealing (Sherry, McGrath, & Levy, 1993).

Since original publication in 1983, some attitudes have changed towards Sherry's model. Giesler (2006) states that Sherry's (1983) model is a reductionist theoretical perspective that has become ubiquitous in consumer research on gift-giving (e.g. (Belk & Coon, 1993; Fischer & Arnold, 1990; Lowrey, Otnes, & Ruth, 2004) and that as a consequence, some of the most important sociological dimensions of consumer gift-giving have remained unexplored. Further, Giesler (2006) believes that this is reflected in subsequent studies' entirely microscopic discussions of the motivations and actions of individual gifting partners across different stages of exchange, and that attempts to look at all gift-giving behaviour in terms of purely dyadic, purely individualistic, or purely economic mechanisms miss much of what impels consumers to give gifts (Giesler, 2006).

As gifts are a form of communication, the process of gift-giving is filled with ways to manage the message each individual sends. Joy (2001) and Ruth et al. (1999) demonstrate that givers are attuned to the social and interpersonal expectations that underlie gift exchange and calculate their investments in a fashion that demonstrates appropriate acknowledgment of social ties and relationship strength. The element of communication takes on particular importance when cultural aspects influence the process. The notion of self is one of the most fundamental assumptions shared within a culture (Kitayama, Markus, Matsumoto, & Norasakkunkit, 1997) and as such, these preconceived notions about gifting and what it means to the individual can be construed differently within and across different cultures, reaction to and thoughts on gift-giving also differing. The nature and role of gift-giving varies with the financial, emotional and symbolic significance accorded it by different cultures (Joy, 2001) and is thus culturally specific (Tynan, Heath, Ennew, Wang, & Sun, 2010). This is seen in particular contrast with collectivist versus individualist cultures, such as China and North America respectively, where the idea of self is expressed differently, and with varying importance. In China, gifts must both reflect the income and status of the giver and symbolise the prestigious status of the recipient to give themselves face, with any mistakes forcing the wrongdoing to break the relationship (Yau, Chan, & Lau, 1999). Collectivist cultures are likely to have different gift-giving processes based on their preconception of expectations that

gifting would be linked to. These factors need to be considered in further research as the literature thus far is relatively North American-oriented and requires investigation into a variety of other cultures.

2.3.2 Gift-Giving as Communication

Gifts have been referred to as a language that employs objects in place of words. The giving of a gift conveys and communicates far more than the giving and receiving of a good or service. Gifts are used to affirm self-hood (Sherry, 1983), in identity formation (Banks, 1979), and possessions are seen as a way to communicate 'my life' (Kleine et al., 1995). Consumers use products to seek distinction, self-definition, identity expression, and to communicate these to others (Pandya & Venkatesh, 1992). Each new gift provides communication from others that confirms and often extends the views of self, developed through previous interactions (Wolfenbarger, 1990). This form of communication ranges from natural forms of self-expression to materialistic exchange and can play a central role in building social networks and communities (Chakrabarti & Berthon, 2012).

Gift-giving in itself is an interpersonal act of symbolic communication, with explicit and implicit meanings ranging from congratulations, love, and regret to obligation and dominance (Mick and DeMoss, 1990a). The communicative aspect of gift-giving has been conceptualised as symbolic messages between giver and receiver (thoughts and feelings), including the giver's impressions about the identities of both parties (Mick & DeMoss, 1990b). The projection of the giver's self and the giver's perception of the receiver are portrayed by gifts and in this way, characteristics of the gift-exchange are instrumental in maintaining social ties and serve as a means of symbolic communication (Schwartz, 1967).

Within dyadic gift-gifting there are elements of anxiety (Wooten, 2000) and disposition (Sherry, McGrath, & Levy, 1992; Sherry et al., 1993) where the individual stresses about the impact of the gift they have given. There is room for error in this form of communication, as the indirect and polysemous nature of social symbols furnishes interpersonal gifts with potential ambiguity that often results in communication errors (Mick & DeMoss, 1990b). This fear and anxiety may be based on social norms and self-perception as well as perception of others involved in the process. Wooten (2000) suggests that in this area gifting anxiety is a

form of social anxiety, which may be to do with the unattainable expectations that recipients impose upon givers. This is because inappropriate gifts can cause embarrassment, threaten social ties, and leave lasting impressions (Sherry et al., 1993). These elements are often why gifting behaviours are viewed as stressful, particularly in times of extreme social importance, such as Christmas.

2.3.3 Special Occasions

Imparting perceptions onto others becomes particularly important on special occasions, such as Christmas, Valentine's Day, birthdays, and other notable occasions. Ensuring recipients are satisfied and pleased with their gift mean donors may be required to invest ample time, effort and financial commitment into gifting events. Underlying issues such as social rules and interpersonal expectations can render the pursuit of a gift into quite an arduous task (Otnes, Lowrey, & Kim, 1993; Sherry, 1983). With the instances of special occasions, context and its implications are very clear. For example, giving a joke gift at a wedding is seen as socially inappropriate, whereas in the context of a stag do, or a birthday of a co-worker, this may be appropriate and cheerfully received (Sherry, 1983).

Gift shopping contributes heavily to overall spend in retail, and with such special events, social pressure rises. Christmas gifts are particularly value expressive, serving diverse social, economic, and personal purposes (Belk, 1983), all factors that can cause anxiety in the donor. Similarly, Valentine's Day – notably in Japan, where confectioners have remanufactured and reinvigorated the event with the traditional gender roles reversed - has the social pressure due to its ritual protocol, but also gender implications. Fischer and Arnold (1990) discuss Cheal's (1987) argument that women are the primary gift givers because of their greater concern with showing love, his reasoning based on men not being offered the same reinforcement of a desirable self-image in the gift-giving process. This social pressure holds particularly for men in Japan, who may purchase out of 'obligation' rather than any other deeply held personal value or desire. Male feelings have been reported to be ambivalent about gift purchase in this context (Minowa, Khomenko, & Belk, 2011). Thus, gift-giving is a strong form of communication, particularly on special occasions, with varying implications for the donor and recipient.

2.4 Self-gifting

The phenomenon that is self-gifting has been conceptualised by Mick and DeMoss (Faure & Mick, 1993; Mick, 1986; Mick & DeMoss, 1990a, 1990b, 1992; Mick et al., 1992). As mentioned, they define the concept as “personally symbolic self-communication through special indulgences that tend to be premeditated and highly context bound” (Mick & DeMoss, 1990b, pg. 322). In a literal sense, this enables the interpersonal gift-giving process to be transferred onto the individual, revolving to an alternate view of the established interpersonal or dyadic gift-giving process, offering a monadic, intrapersonal shift instead. As the seminal authors on the topic, Mick and DeMoss, and to a certain extent Faure, (Faure & Mick, 1993; Mick & DeMoss, 1990a, 1990b, 1992; Mick et al., 1992; Mick & Faure, 1998) continued to research and impart knowledge that has been developed by other authors. Examples of this behaviour come from exploratory studies, where individuals reported purchasing a present from ‘me to me’ (Mick & DeMoss, 1990b) that may be ‘nonessential’ (Mick & DeMoss, 1990a) and ‘deserved’ (Mick & DeMoss, 1992).

The definition of self-gifting draws on four important aspects of the phenomenon (intrapersonal, specialness, premeditation, context), which help differentiate self-gifts from non-self-gifts (e.g. utilitarian purchases) and pseudo self-gifts Mick and DeMoss (1990b). Pseudo self-gifts are token gifts, unlikely to meet the definition’s requirements. Further, Faure and Mick (1993) identified three essential aspects of self-gifts, namely; communication, exchange, and specialness, which are reflected in the definition. Communication refers to the way in which self-gifts communicate with the self, influencing self-definition and self-esteem, similar to interpersonal gift-giving. The exchange aspect relates to a contract the individuals enter into with themselves, seen particularly in the context of deservingness. Specialness sets self-gifts apart from everyday purchases, communicating emotions more strongly than those produced by utilitarian purchases.

It is likely that Mick and DeMoss’ initial interest was piqued, in part, by Schwartz (1967) who mused on the ‘interesting area’ of giving gifts to oneself. At the time, this behaviour was regarded as self-indulgent due to deprivation of “material demonstrations of recognition from others, the internalization of such disregard can only be avoided by the utilization of one-self as a source of pleasure” (Schwartz, 1967, p. 30). Self-gifting is insightful in that it seems to

cross boundaries present within the dyadic giving context. It also highlights the changing landscape of gift-giving culture, social norms and expectations in our ever advancing, technologically capable age. Where years ago donor-recipient relationships were traditionally face-to-face events of gift exchange, with the invention of the internet and social media, the way gifting is viewed and acted on has altered (Skageby, 2010).

Self-gifts are prevalent in certain contexts, namely reward and therapy. Four other contexts include birthday or special occasions, relieving stress, just to be nice to yourself, and times when you have extra money (Mick & DeMoss, 1990a). These contexts are marginally different to interpersonal gift-giving, and it has also been suggested that self-gifts reflect consumer behaviour in some of its most flexible, dramatic, and personally meaningful forms (Mick & DeMoss, 1990b). This includes items gifted around graduation, birthdays and promotion as well as divorce and receiving bad grades. Research has also highlighted demographic variables and propensity to self-gift, as well as the differences in product category selection based on self-gifting context (Mick & DeMoss, 1992). Commonly purchased product types across all contexts were clothing, fast-food or grocery food, non-fast-food-restaurants, music products and personal care services. Specific to the reward context, non-fast-food-restaurants, travel and recreational products were more likely to be purchased, compared to fast-food or grocery food, personal care services, clothing and music products in the therapy context (Mick & DeMoss, 1992). Other options include experience gifts, such as travel or tickets to a show. It is likely that experience gifts, as opposed to tangible products, are linked to the 'escape' theme (Mick & DeMoss, 1992) and therapy context. Mukhopadhyay and Johar (2009) also demonstrated that self-reward occurred across various different consumption categories.

Further demographic factors from a recent study by Ward and Tran (2008) include how females in virtually every category were significantly more likely to gift than males, with non-married individuals more prone to self-gifting than married individuals, in some situations. Similar findings were reported in Luomala and Laaksonen (1999) and Mick and DeMoss' (1992) work. Further findings showed that women had a much higher propensity to self-gift than men in situations termed 'nice-to-self' and 'therapeutic' (Mick & DeMoss, 1992). Women tend to use dyadic gift-giving more regularly and often in order to express

empathy or sympathy, as well as being more likely than men to self-gift (Fischer & Arnold, 1990; Ward & Tran, 2008).

While respondents were more likely to buy for others than themselves, individuals did report self-gifting from six to ten times per year (Ward & Tran, 2008), highlighting the prevalence of the behaviour. Mick and DeMoss (1990a) also consider one of the tenets of self-gifts that they are premeditated and intentionally acquired, distinguishing them from other non-self-gifts, such as impulsive and compulsive consumer purchase. However, this does not require all self-gifts to be planned, rather that the consumer realises that a special acquisition is occurring (Mick & DeMoss, 1990a).

As well as context, socioeconomic factors were found to be likely to influence self-gifting behaviour (Mick & DeMoss, 1990a, 1990b). This included: current financial condition compared to a year ago (worse, same, better), education level, marriage status, age, whether anyone else lives in the same house and income level (Mick & DeMoss, 1992). Demographic aspects such as age negatively impacted likelihood to self-gift with no exceptions, while current financial position was found to be positively related to every self-gift propensity (Mick & DeMoss, 1992).

2.4.1 Models of Self-Gifting

Building on Mick and DeMoss' work, conceptualisations by others attempt to describe the nature of this phenomenon. Firstly, Attribution Theory was utilised by Faure and Mick (1993). This study was based on comments from Mick and DeMoss (1990b) that this theory may be useful in investigating self-gifts as they relate to the way that individuals try to make sense of the world and the actions of those in it, as well as themselves. Mick and Faure (1993) adapted Weiner's (1986) dimensions of causal attribution, proposing that these can lead to self-gift behaviour either by cognitive or affective routes. Luomala (1997) also applied Attribution Theory to his work on the mood-alleviate propensity of self-gifting (Luomala, 1998, 2001, 2002; Luomala & Laaksonen, 1997, 1999) noting that achievements of positive or negative outcomes can be attributed to internal or external causes. This model may explain some of the reasons behind likelihood to self-gift and the context around doing so, but requires further research for a full explanation of the concept.

Additionally, Mick and Faure (1998) later proposed a model that showed the influence of multiple factors on an individual's likelihood to self-gift (Figure 2). This model shows the influence of a variety of factors, including deservingness and emotions, on the likelihood of purchase in an achievement context. This serves to explain the process of internal and external attribution on likelihood to self-gift within a reward context, where individuals are sure that their success is an outcome of their personal hard work. It is likely then, that if they have a positive achievement outcome it may lead to happiness, internal attribution and deservingness, which may combine to impact likelihood to self-gift. Other models attempting to show the process of self-gifting or what influences likelihood, include metacognition perspectives (Olshavsky & Lee, 1993) and more recently Howland's (2010) illusion of ideal reflexive individualism. However, thus far, no models have been shown to predict and consistently show definitive, quantifiable findings on how to accurately predict self-gifting behaviour or why exactly it is undertaken.

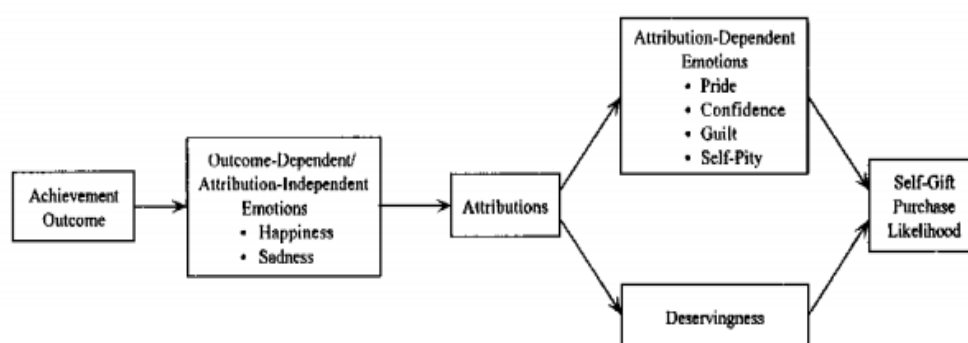


Figure 2: *Self-gift purchase likelihood as a function of achievement outcome, attributions, emotions, and deservingness (Mick & Faure, 1998)*

While Mick and Faure (1998) attempted to show the range of factors that influence likelihood to self-gift, these attributions are likely to differ based on the highly contingent and contextual scenario the behaviour occurs within. Further research in this area would be of use to specify exactly what leads an individual to self-gift, beyond the contexts already identified as influential. Efforts have been made to predict the likelihood of SGCB utilising other theories at their core. Weisfeld-Spolter and Thakkar (2012) employed the Theory of Reasoned Action and incorporated self-construal to make predictions regarding individual's attitude to self-gifting in general and self-gift advertisements specifically. Their model was

conceptualised in order to show that self-construal will influence people's subjective norm and attitude towards self-gifting. Together, the subjective norm and attitude towards self-gifting will be indicative of consumer's intention to self-gift, and this intention according to the theory is the best predictor of what their actual behaviour will be like (Weisfeld-Spolter & Thakkar, 2012). This line of investigation may proffer useful information when investigated empirically.

2.4.2 Achievement and Reward Context

As mentioned previously, reward and therapy have been outlined as the most prominent contexts in which self-gifting is likely to occur. Reward is often linked to a theme of deserving as people feel they deserve a reward for their hard work. The achievement context is most closely linked to goal attempt (Mick & Faure, 1998; Ono et al., 2012) and in this way, self-gifts can be seen as incentives or consolation prizes dependent on attainment or failure to reach the aim. Linked to this is effort, as personal effort is related to self-gift behaviour (Mick & DeMoss, 1990a, 1990b; Ono et al., 2012). In an achievement context, effort was one of four factors (inclusive of happiness of success/sadness of failure, necessity of recovery, and reward/therapeutic mood) that Ono et al. (2012) stated that influenced likelihood to self-gift.

As self-gifts can take on a reward or therapeutic nature, this aligns with their role in self-expression. Moreover, as in interpersonal gift-giving, self-gifts take on a communicative role as outlined in Mick and DeMoss' (1990b) definition. Howland (2010) noted that puritanical self-gifts publicly express, and seek social validation of, individual accomplishments or life transitions, such as a work promotion or marriage engagement. This relates to the achievement context, in that self-gifts are purchased within these areas. Within interpersonal gift-giving, people prefer to receive gifts with a greater symbolic meaning from those close to them (Parsons, Ballantine, & Kennedy, 2011) while Wolfinbarger (1990) approaches gift-giving as an opportunity to express the giver's perception of both him or herself and the receiver. The importance of gifts both dyadically and monadically in self-communication and in regard to self-perception, communication to the self as well as externally, show strong links here regardless of the context.

2.4.3 Therapy Context

Emotion plays a similar role to symbolism, as Wu (2010) states that we actively work to adhere to the appropriate emotion norms that govern the situations we find ourselves in. Negative emotional experiences are said to be self-regulated (Luomala, 2001) and in their work, Luomala and Laaksonen (1999) discuss self-gifting as a mood-alleviate strategy stating that moods are not only experienced but handled as well, with self-gifting behaviours playing a leading role in consumers' mood-regulatory activities. They go as far as stating that self-regulation of negative moods through consumption-related activities is a common and integral part of consumers' everyday lives (Luomala, 1998). In terms of negative mood alleviation, this can be seen as self-gifting in a therapeutic context. Overall, there are many influences on likelihood to self-gift with mood and emotion playing important parts, particularly in the achievement context.

As mentioned previously, gifts selected may differ dependent on the context in which they are purchased. In a mood-alleviate context, participants mentioned wine, candy, shoes, make-up, pedicures, haircuts, and perfume, amongst other hedonic products (Luomala, 2001). While these products are mainly emotive, it has also been found that utilitarian products can become self-gifts based heavily on context, for example, a large order instead of a regular order of fried potatoes in a therapy context (Mick & DeMoss, 1990b).

When the receiver is also the giver it is assumed that the anxiety and fear of possible negative outcomes prevalent in interpersonal gift-giving would be diminished, due in part to the 'perfect gift' given by the self - one that is selected with emphatic accuracy (Mick & DeMoss, 1990b). In this way, self-gifts have impact over self-perception, self-esteem and mood as gifts are emotionally symbolic, hedonic purchases that are intentionally purchased to alter or improve emotional state.

2.4.4 Cultural Influence

The notion of self is one of the most fundamental assumptions shared within a culture (Kitayama et al., 1997). The nature and role of gift-giving varies with the financial, emotional, and symbolic significance afforded it by different cultures (Joy, 2001), which is

seen in particular contrast with collectivist versus individualist cultures, such as China and North America respectively, where the idea of self is expressed differently, and with ranging importance.

The Confucian influence on Chinese culture is strongly aligned with explaining much behaviour, and Yau et al. (1999) note that Chinese use gifts vicariously with different motivations, and that gift-giving is governed by the cultural understanding that there is an obligation to reciprocate gifts (e.g. Beatty, Kahle, & Homer, 1991; Sun, 2007). Comparable to the cultural tendency towards reciprocation is the concept of *guanxi*, defined as a network of relationships a person builds through the exchange of gifts and favours to attain mutual benefits (D'Souza, 2003). This concept differs in many ways from Western culture, but highlights the differences in perception and communicated messages that gifts can play across contexts.

It is important to note that the majority of studies regarding self-gifting are heavily North American influenced (Mick & DeMoss, 1990b, 1992; Mick & Faure, 1998), although more recent studies have explored the differing influence of culture on self-gifting behaviour. This includes the differences between individualist and collectivist cultures and the impact of this on SGCB, as well as how motivations and emotions associated with Chinese SGCB are found to be far more complex than those in the Western countries (Beatty et al., 1991; Pusaksrikit & Kang, 2008; Sun, 2007; Tynan et al., 2010; Weisfeld-Spolter & Thakkar, 2012).

2.5 The Context of Physical Activity

Physical activity relates to goal setting as a context where individuals can set physical goals, and to self-gifting as they can undertake SGCB throughout this process. At present in New Zealand, 31% of adults are obese and 34% are overweight (Ministry of Health, 2014). The prevalence of clinically severe obesity continues to be increasing (Sturm & Hattori, 2013), and the global linear time trend forecasts suggest that by 2030, 51% of the US population will be obese (Finkelstein et al., 2012). Exercise is promoted as a way to curb rising obesity rates, with obvious links between the two. However, while goal setting has been tested through educational, organisational, performance and intrinsic contexts, amongst others, self-gifting

has yet to be explored in a wide ranging variety of contexts, including physically active behaviours.

Exercise and physical activity as a context for goal setting also relates to sports performance. Locke and Latham (1985) believe that tasks performed in organizational settings and in the laboratory have much in common with sports activities in that both involve mental and physical actions directed toward some end. Goal setting, in addition to its direct effects on performance, gives an athlete a sense of control and positive self-direction. Weinberg and Gould (1995) state that goals commit them to the work, time, pain and whatever else is part of the price of achieving success, and that goals help to drive them. Past research suggests that focusing on what has not yet been accomplished (goal focus) signals a lack of progress towards one's high commitment goals and inspires greater motivation than does focusing on what has already been accomplished (Conlon et al., 2011). Dishman, Sallis, and Orenstein (1985) also report that perceived self-efficacy (or confidence in one's ability to exercise) and self-estimates of the likelihood of adherence have predicted future activity, while perception of one's overall physical competence has not.

In a similar vein, in their study on weight loss, Conlon et al. (2011) found that goal-focused participants reported higher levels of commitment to their goal and, ultimately, lost more weight than did accomplishment-focused and no focus control participants. Weight stigma, or the bias associated with obesity is a factor that has been found to positively correlate with motivation to avoid exercise, even after controlling for BMI and body dissatisfaction (Puhl & Heuer, 2009). Thus, those who are exercising to control weight are already in a different mind-set than those who are engaging in exercise for other reasons. Studies show the power of the social environment in shaping exercise patterns, and how much of a motivator external factors can be. Personalised social reinforcement from programme staff or an activity partner has also been found to be a potent determinant of adherence to clinical programs in several studies (Dishman et al., 1985). Knowledge of and belief in the health benefits of physical activity may motivate initial involvement, but feelings of enjoyment and well-being seem to be stronger motives for continued participation in corporate programs (Dishman et al., 1985). Thus, motivation to increase exercise participation in overweight or obese individuals is difficult to relate to any one factor.

2.6 Chapter Summary

At the end of this chapter it becomes clear that goal setting and self-gifting, and even self-gifting and interpersonal gifting to a certain extent, are linked in ways that make them relatable in this context. Further, what the literature has highlighted is that there was no contextually specific research on the phenomenon that is self-gifting in relation to physical activity. Given the highly context-bound characteristics of SGCB (Mick and DeMoss, 1990b; Faure and Mick, 1993), most of the few empirical studies undertaken so far have attempted to understand those contexts that motivate self-gift behaviour (e.g. Heath et al., 2011; Mick and DeMoss, 1990a; Sherry et al., 1995). However, in their studies of motivation, there has been no conclusive evidence of what specifically motivates an individual to purchase a self-gift. What is known are the contexts in which this behaviour is most likely to occur, as well as certain key demographic factors that also influence the likelihood to engage in this behaviour.

The context of reward – potentially in regard to a goal that has been set – is one of the top contexts that self-gifting behaviour occurs within, yet various types of achievement have yet to be investigated further. As Luomala and Laaksonen (1999) and Kivetz and Simonson (2002) illustrate, several self-gift experiences of this nature, such as finishing a race, completing an assignment, or attaining a high exam grade can contribute to this behaviour. In this way, physical activity becomes a clear choice for further investigation as completing a race is a goal that is able to be worked toward and can be highly contextual towards the point of achievement. Further, it has been stated that participating in goal setting improves self-efficacy, thus individuals are not only encouraged to set further goals but are also likely to develop higher expectations of success (Karakowsky & Mann, 2008). In this way, those that set and achieve physical goals are more likely to improve their levels of self-efficacy, known to influence self-gifting likelihood and behaviours. As a result, this research was implemented to address these gaps, with the intention of providing further information on whether context, specifically physical activity, has any influence over likelihood to engage in SGCB.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The aim of this research is to explore the relationship between self-gifting behaviour and goal setting in individuals setting physical goals, as outlined in the two previous chapters. This chapter seeks to build on this discussion, first by covering theoretical, ontological and epistemological assumptions and then discussing the research design, method utilised, how data was analysed and how its quality was assessed. As previously mentioned, the exploratory nature of this research gives itself most appropriately to qualitative research. Creswell (2003) states that a qualitative approach is one in which the inquirer often makes knowledge claims based primarily on constructivist perspectives (e.g., the multiple meanings of individual experiences, meanings socially and historically constructed with an intent of developing a theory or pattern) or advocacy/participatory perspectives (e.g. political, issue-oriented, collaborative or change oriented) or both. Qualitative research cannot be reduced to data collection and interpretation procedures, methodological principles or detailed and exotic descriptions of life-worlds. Methods and methodologies are not, for this kind of research, an end in themselves (Flick, von Kardoff, & Steinke, 2004). In this way, qualitative research is deemed appropriate, and its use is discussed further below.

Qualitative research is how the precise description of life-worlds ought to contribute to a better understanding of specific cultural phenomena and forms of action, to assist in the recognition of structures and patterns of their social reproduction and their particular rationale (Flick et al., 2004). Strauss and Corbin (1990) seek to define qualitative research when they state that by definition, any type of research that produces findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of quantification can be viewed as qualitative. However, how researchers implement this method depends upon a range of factors including: “their beliefs about the nature of the social world and what can be known about it (ontology), the nature of knowledge and how it can be acquired (epistemology), the purpose(s) and goals of the research, the characteristics of the research participants, the audience for the research, the funders of the research, and the position and environment of the researchers themselves” (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls & Ormston, 2013, pg. 2).

Qualitative research makes use of the unusual or the deviant and unexpected as a source of insight and a mirror whose reflection makes the unknown perceptible in the known, and the known perceptible in the unknown, thereby opening up further possibilities for (self-) recognition (Flick, von Kardorff, & Steinke, 2004). Further, qualitative research also uses strategies of inquiry such as narratives, phenomenologies, ethnographies, grounded theory studies, or case studies. The researcher collects open-ended emerging data with the primary intent of developing themes from the data (Creswell, 2003); an integral part of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2008) that is one way of many in which qualitative research can be analysed. It is the intention of this chapter to provide in-depth coverage of the methods and methodology utilised in this research, the theoretical underpinning giving it grounding, and the way in which the sample was selected, and data collected and analysed.

3.2 Ontological and Epistemological Considerations

“How is it possible, if it is, for us to gain knowledge of the world?”

Hughes and Sharrock (1997)

Before research is implemented, a need arises to consider the philosophy of research and grounding of ideas behind it. This is due to the fact that prior consideration of the philosophy of research helps to contribute a deeper and wider perspective of research, so specific research projects can have a clearer purpose within the wider context, as well as the implications that a research position will have for what, how and why research is carried out (Carson, Gilmore, Perry, & Gronhaug, 2001). Developing a philosophical perspective requires that the researcher make several core assumptions concerning two dimensions: the nature of society and the nature of science (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). The nature of science involves either a subjective or an objective approach to research, and these two major philosophical approaches are delineated by several core assumptions concerning ontology (reality), epistemology (knowledge), human nature (pre-determined or not), and methodology (Holden & Lynch, 2004). Objectivism and subjectivism have been described as a continuum's polar opposites with varying philosophical positions aligned between them (Holden & Lynch, 2004). The latter assumptions, concerning human nature, involves whether

or not the researcher perceives man as the controller or as the controlled (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). The final assumption, methodology, is the researcher's tool-kit – it represents all the means available to social scientists to investigate phenomena (Holden & Lynch, 2004). Essentially, these assumptions are concerned with the nature, validity, and limits of inquiry (Rosenau, 1991). These assumptions are discussed below, with a more thorough description of the ontological and epistemological assumptions behind the research at hand.

Ontological assumptions concern the very essence of the phenomena under investigation, and relate to the nature of reality, that is, what things, if any, have existence or whether reality is “the product of one's mind” (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, pg. 1). Crotty (1998) defines ontology as being concerned with the nature of existence, the structure of reality as such and therefore ultimately with the study of being. Further discussion revolves around whether the ‘reality’ to be investigated is external to the individual or the product of individual consciousness; whether ‘reality’ is of an ‘objective’ nature, or the product of individual cognition; whether ‘reality’ is a given ‘out there’ in the world, or the product of one's mind (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). This is an important consideration in regard to research, in that one should take a stance on reality. Burrell and Morgan (1979) place ontology on a continuum between a subjective and objective approach, where nominalism and realism are the two ends of the spectrum, while Hudson and Ozanne (1988) offer positivist and interpretive manners as approaches to ontological assumptions. Realist versus relativist is offered as another option (Crotty, 1998; Madill, Jordan, & Shirley, 2000).

Holden and Lynch (2004) state that much of the research that has been completed in organisational science has been based on the assumption that reality is objective and out there waiting to be discovered, and that this knowledge can be identified and communicated to others (Holden & Lynch, 2004). This relates to assumptions around epistemology, which concerns the study of the nature of knowledge. As a part of this, discussions include how one might begin to understand the world and communicate this as knowledge to fellow human beings. These assumptions entail ideas, for example, about what forms of knowledge can be obtained, and how one can sort out what is to be regarded as ‘true’ from what is to be regarded as ‘false’ (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). This has often been queried, raised by Gettier (1963) who contemplated whether or not justified true belief is knowledge. In choosing an

epistemological stance, the researcher identifies, explains, and justifies his or her philosophical grounding (Crotty, 1998). Crotty (1998) states that there are three different epistemologies; namely, objectivism, constructionism and subjectivism. These assumptions have different grounding theories, with constructionism as the intermediary between the more extreme objectivist and subjectivist epistemologies.

Constructionism as an epistemology supposes that the truth cannot be discovered, but comes into existence in and out of engagement with the realities in the world (Crotty, 1998). Further, the epistemology that views reality as a social construction focuses on analysing the specific processes through which reality is created. Here, reality resides in the process through which it is created, and possible knowledge is confined to an understanding of that process (Morgan & Smircich, 1980). Social constructionism best gives itself to gifting as a context, in that the approach begs the researcher to focus on interaction. How do humans act towards one another and the objects in their world? What meanings do they attach to them? (Esterberg, 2002). However, these assumptions are consequential to each other, that is, their view of ontology effects their epistemological persuasion which, in turn, effects their view of human nature; consequently, choice of methodology logically follows the assumptions the researcher has already made (Holden & Lynch, 2004). Thus, this study adopts a social constructionist epistemological stance based on how it is believed that people attach meaning to objects, as well as their reality. This is in keeping with Crotty (1998) who supports this concept, based on how as individuals' interpretation of the world and their constructions of knowledge are embedded in the culture and society they were raised in and are part of. This approach is most appropriate for research in this context, and aligns most significantly with the researcher's personal views.

3.3 Theoretical Assumptions

To discuss the theoretical assumptions beneath the methodology selection, the assumptions underpinning qualitative research as a whole, as specified by Flick et al. (2004), are first provided in order to show the relevance to this area of research and the suitability of a qualitative methodology. Firstly, they state that social reality is understood as a shared product and attribution of meanings, as well as how the processual nature and reflexivity of social reality are assumed. This relates to the perceptions individuals have on their reality.

Further, Flick et al. (2004) propose that ‘objective’ life circumstances are made relevant to a life-world through subjective meanings, and finally that the communicative nature of social reality permits the reconstruction of constructions of social reality to become the starting point for research.

Social reality is defined as the result of meanings and contexts that are jointly created in social interaction (Flick et al., 2004). These concepts underlie the process of qualitative research holistically, but do not relate to specific theoretical assumptions for specific methodologies. Spiggle (1994), on the nature of research, states that as investigators, we attempt to understand our informants by grasping a concept, idea, or experience in their terms – emically. Such understanding represents one layer of meaning, supplemented by other conceptual layers (Wallendorf & Brucks, 1993). We may grasp their meanings and experiences by translating between their ‘text’ (e.g. a passage in an interview) – the target domain, the distant text – and our own experience, knowledge and ideas – the source domain (Spiggle, 1994).

In this instance, the research takes a social constructivist stance. At its core, social constructivism is primarily a theory of cognitive development where emphasis shifts from the individual as a meaning-maker of the interaction between individual and environment to a view of collectively constructed meaning (Sivan, 1986). Sivan (1986) goes on to describe social constructivism as socialisation, a process of acquisition of skills, knowledge, and dispositions that enable the individual to partake in his or her society that become the means of cognitive development, as well as the means whereby an individual learns the needs and motives underlying human relations and the modes of action necessary to interact with people, objects, and ideas in the environment. Creswell (2003) furthers this, stating that social constructivism is a perspective through which knowledge is claimed through an alternative process and set of assumptions.

Social constructivism is appropriate in this research given the highly contextual environment in which gifting occurs. Importantly, the aim of this research is to uncover knowledge and insight into areas in a way that has yet to be investigated. Dittmar, Beattie, and Friese (1995) explored social constructivism as a potential influence on gender differences in impulse

buying, a concept closely related to self-gifting behaviour, which showed men tend to buy leisure items, while women tend to buy symbolic and self-expressive goods. In this way, utilising the way in which gifts, physical activity, and goal setting are learned and added to by social interaction is essential in uncovering themes and providing insight into this area. Moreover, this style of research compliments the ontological and epistemological assumptions raised earlier, whereby social constructivism forms the basis for research in this area.

3.4 Methodology

Methodology is an important consideration of the research process, due to the need to match methodology and subsequent methods with the ontological, epistemological, and theoretical assumptions – all related to the question ‘why research?’ (Holden & Lynch, 2004). A methodology is the underlying strategy or plan of action in order to develop an understanding of the topic under investigation (Crotty, 1998). In this research, social constructivism is the stance taken, as mentioned previously, and an appropriate qualitative method was selected as a result. The intention behind the research and the scope of the research questions were also considered in this process. The improper matching of methodology to the research problem may produce spurious results (Holden & Lynch, 2004), and as such much care was taken in this decision-making process. Subsequently, thematic analysis is the methodology selected and utilised alongside semi-structured interviews as the method of data collection.

3.4.1 Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is the chosen methodology for this research. It is a foundational method for qualitative analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and the process involves the identification of themes through careful reading and re-reading of the data (Rice & Ezzy, 1999). Essentially, thematic analysis is a method for identifying and analysing patterns in qualitative data (V. Clarke & Braun, 2013). Despite widespread use, thematic analysis has only recently started to achieve the ‘brand recognition’ held by methodologies such as grounded theory and interpretative phenomenological analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2013). As Spiggle (1994) states, interpretation of others’ experiences is inherently subjective. Thus, thematic analysis was selected as it is a search for themes that emerge as being important to the description of the phenomenon (Daly, Kellehear, & Gliksman, 1997) and is a form of pattern recognition within

the data, where emerging themes become the categories for analysis (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2008). In this way, it is hoped that thematic analysis enables accurate gathering of insight within the selected context for the research at hand.

Amongst others, the benefits of utilising thematic analysis as a methodology include having an accessible and theoretically flexible approach to analysing qualitative data, its ease of application across a range of theoretical and epistemological approaches, as well as generating unanticipated insights and summarising key features of large bodies of data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is theoretically flexible because the search for and examination of patterning across language does not require adherence to any particular theory of language or explanatory meaning framework for human beings, experiences or practices (Clarke & Braun, 2013). Theoretical independence also means that thematic analysis can be applied within a range of theoretical frameworks, from essentialist to constructionist (Clarke & Braun, 2013).

The actual process of conducting thematic analysis involves making strategic decisions. This includes; deciding what counts as a theme, whether to use inductive or theoretical analysis, and assessing fit with ontological and epistemological assumptions, as mentioned earlier. In regards to the inductive versus deductive stance, a comparison exists that has been referred to as bottom up (Frith & Gleeson, 2004) versus top down (Boyatzis, 1998). An inductive approach means the themes identified are strongly linked to the data themselves (Patton, 1990), a process of coding without trying to fit it into a pre-existing coding frame, in comparison to being driven by the researchers theoretical or analytic interest in the area (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Further decisions involve the level at which themes are analysed, namely semantic or latent. With a semantic approach, the themes are identified within the explicit or surface meanings of the data, and the analyst is not looking for anything beyond what a participant has said or written (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Conversely, the latent level goes beyond the semantic content of the data, and starts to identify or examine the underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualisations and ideologies that are theorised as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Latent themes tend to be more constructionist in nature, in keeping with the epistemological assumptions of the research. Thus, the decision to use thematic analysis is informed by its flexibility,

adaptability, ability to analyse themes at different levels, and suitability in regards to the selected epistemological stance.

3.5 Research Design

A good qualitative research study design is one which has a clearly defined purpose, in which there is coherence between the research questions and the methods or approaches proposed, and which generates data which is valid and reliable (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, & Ormston, 2013). In keeping with the process of developing qualitative research, research questions were formed as a guide. Flick (2004) remarks on the importance of getting this right, stating that research questions may on the one hand be kept too broad, which means that they would then provide almost no guidance in the planning and implementation of a study. However, they may also be kept too narrow and thereby miss the target of investigation or block rather than promote new discoveries. The research questions guiding this study are as below:

1. Does goal setting and goal attempt have any influence over individuals' likelihood to self-gift?
2. Does the nature of the goal have any influence over self-gifting behaviour?
3. Does goal commitment and importance have any impact on individuals' self-gifting behaviour?

These questions encompass the exploratory manner of the research, and ground the investigation in an exploratory manner while guiding interview questions in order to gather as much insight as possible into this field of investigation.

The research design is a plan for collecting and analysing evidence that will make it possible for the investigator to answer whatever questions he or she has posed. The design of an investigation touches almost all aspects of the research, from the minute details of data collection to the selection of the techniques of data analysis (Ragin, 1994). As the intention of this study is to be exploratory in nature, qualitative research methods are most appropriate. Primary data was collected using semi-structured interviews from a sample, and the data collected was analysed using thematic analysis. It was hoped that this group would be

representative of women who had recently commenced running, covering a wide age bracket and cross-sectional demographics of society as a whole. The following sections discuss the sample and how data was collected and analysed.

3.6 Data Collection

3.6.1 Sample Criteria

A common goal of survey research is to collect data representative of a population (Bartlett, Kotrlik, & Higgins, 2001). Inappropriate, inadequate, or excessive sample sizes continue to influence the quality and accuracy of research (Bartlett et al., 2001), thus appropriate samples and sample size are an important consideration. In this study, certain criteria were used to sort appropriate participants from those that were unsuitable. Criteria are essential to guide the decisions, so that other researchers using the same procedure can arrive at a similar result or so that the outcome of case construction can be subjected to rational criticism (Merkens, 2004). Predominantly, studies related to self-gifting have focussed almost exclusively on female participants (Fischer & Arnold, 1990; Luomala & Laaksonen, 1999; Mick & DeMoss, 1992; Ward & Tran, 2008) as they have been shown to be more predetermined toward self-gifting behaviour. In this instance, this criterion was carried forward and only female respondents were selected.

Further criteria for the selection of women that were interviewed was a requirement around having completed their first ever running event after the beginning of 2013. This is due to the necessity of enabling accurate recall of any self-gifting behaviours, as well as ensuring that the goal was of particular importance to the individual. Lack of goal importance was an unlikely prospect, as the group recruited from entailed a financial commitment of \$289 for an 8 week program (Extra Mile Runners, 2014). Thus, goal commitment should be increased due to financial commitment (Wofford et al., 1992).

3.6.2 Sample Recruitment

To ensure that the sample was representative, as well as in line with the criteria set, recruitment occurred through the use of a third party, a local running group named *Extra Mile*

Runners. The club runs a number of programmes catering to all fitness levels, and enjoys widespread popularity in its home city. Their owner was approached, who contacted their database informing the runners of a study requiring participants, as well as clearly stating the criteria they needed to fit. Essentially, this employed self-selection, as women were not approached, rather they volunteered their time. This was incentivised with the provision of a \$50 Westfield gift card for those that participated. Potential participants made contact via email, and were asked to read an Information Sheet (Appendix 1) before organising an interview.

The response to the call to action by the owner was remarkable, with an array of woman making contact and themselves available for selection. From this exercise, fourteen participants were selected. The women were a widely representative sample, encompassing a variety of ages (from 22-70 years old), backgrounds, and running abilities. Table 1 below summarises the characteristics of each participant. Finally, prior to their interview, participants were asked to read and sign a Consent Form (Appendix 2). This ensured the privacy of their identities and information they gave. All names in the coming chapters have been changed to pseudonyms as a result.

3.7 Method

3.7.1 Semi-structured Interviews

In selecting a method for investigation, it is important that the method is appropriate for the desired outcome and is oriented to understanding as a discovery principle. Because of the possibility of enquiring openly about situational meanings or motives for action, or collecting everyday theories and self-interpretations in a differentiated and open way, and also because of the possibility of discursive understanding through interpretations, open or semi-standardised interviews provide important opportunities for an empirical application of action-theory ideas (Hopf, 2004). Further, semi-structured interviews are well suited to the exploration of the perceptions and opinions of respondents regarding complex and sometimes sensitive issues and enable probing for more information and clarification of answers (Barriball & While, 1994). One of their uses here is the imparting of expert knowledge about the research field in question, the recording and analysis of the informants' subjective

perspective, or the collection of data relating to their biography (Hopf, 2004). Thus, this method was deemed appropriate in this instance.

Semi-structured interviews require a certain amount of fixed questions which are merely used as a flexible guideline throughout the interview as the interviewee's answers direct the dialogue (Cavana, Delahaye, & Sekaran, 2001). This enables the researcher to guide the conversation, but with room and flexibility to change the direction of conversation to uncover insight that may have been otherwise left undiscovered. The interview guide used in this study can be found in Appendix 3. It focuses on first building rapport, and then suggests various aspects of the goal setting and self-gifting contexts that can be used as a guide to conversation.

Once participants had set-up a time to be interviewed, the meeting consisted of signing the Consent Form, giving the gift card and then progressing to commencing the interview. Interviews took place at a place of the participant's choice to ensure they were comfortable in their surroundings, and open to giving information. Locations ranged from space on campus, to local cafes with quiet rooms. All interviews were audio recorded with the participant's permission as a way of enabling transcription and ensuring accuracy of phrases and details.

The interviews ranged in length from 40 minutes to 1 hour and 15 minutes. When selecting the number of interviews to be conducted, saturation, or the point where no additional information is found in the data (Goulding, 2005) is suggested as a practical end point. Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) attempted to operationalise saturation and make evidence-based recommendations regarding non-probabilistic sample sizes for interviews, due to the fact that while the idea of saturation is helpful at the conceptual level, it provides little practical guidance for estimating sample sizes, prior to data collection, necessary for conducting quality research. Their findings showed that saturation occurred within the first twelve interviews (Guest et al., 2006), thus a sample size of fourteen is appropriate in this instance. Further, the number of interviews conducted is in line with similar research (Heath et al., 2011). Finally, saturation was reached at fourteen interviews as well, thus no further interviews were conducted or data collected. In this way, semi-structured interviews were used to ascertain various aspects of opinions and instances of self-gifting behaviour and goal

setting, as well as physical achievements. The wide ranging and varied sample was an important part of getting to this point, as this variety also meant a range of responses that aided investigation into this topic and context.

#	Participant	Age	Occupation	Ability
1	Anna	22	Hairdresser	Beginner
2	Samantha	22	Student/Photographer	Beginner
3	Sabrina	70	Retired	Beginner
4	Abigail	45	Nurse	Beginner
5	Katherine	49	Retail	Beginner
6	Louise	65	Receptionist	Beginner
7	Bridget	46	Ex-Army Nurse/Student	Beginner
8	Hannah	49	Executive	Beginner
9	Emily	40	Adult student	Intermediate
10	Harriet	50	Nurse	Intermediate
11	Victoria	58	Charge Nurse	Intermediate
12	Rachael	35	Mother	Experienced
13	Elizabeth	49	Account Manager	Experienced
14	Bianca	28	Office work/Student	Experienced

Table 1: Summary of Sample Demographics

Level of Ability	
Programmes Completed	Overall Rating
Up to 5	Beginner
Up to 5 + Up to 10	
Up to 10	
Half marathon	Intermediate
Up to 5 + Up to 10 + Half	
Multiple half marathons	Experienced
Full marathon	

Table 2: Grading of Ability

3.8 Transcription

Transcription is understood as the graphic representation of selected aspects of the behaviour of individuals engaged in a conversation (Kowal & O'Connell, 2004). Transcriptions are

needed to make fleeting conversational behaviour permanently available on paper for scientific analysis. The aim of producing a transcript is to represent on paper as accurately as possible the strings of words uttered (verbal features), but frequently also their acoustic form, for example, in the shape of pitch height or loudness (prosodic features) and any accompanying non-linguistic behaviour (Kowal & O'Connell, 2004). Transcription in this instance aimed to report all details of the interviews conducted in order to provide a more accurate base for analysis. All transcripts can be found in full in the attached CD. Due to time constraints, transcription was completed by a third party source, that was made aware of the security of the information, and followed due procedures to maintain privacy and security of all participant's information.

3.9 Data Analysis

Given that the methodology utilised was thematic analysis and the method of data collection was semi-structured interviews, the process was completed holistically in a non-iterative manner. Thematic analysis itself was utilised by using the guidelines set out by Braun and Clarke (2006). Their article discusses thematic analysis from a psychological viewpoint, with the aim of creating a guide on usage as well as espousing the benefits of this approach. There are six phases; familiarising yourself with your data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and finally producing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The data analysis followed these guidelines, with initial codes created and the drawing out of themes from the data. The intuitive, subjective, particularistic nature of interpretation renders it difficult to model or present in a linear way (Spiggle, 1994), however, using thematic analysis allowed themes to be developed. From the transcripts, quotations of varying lengths were selected for reporting in the findings section, Chapter Four. In this way, the data provided ample information and description of the behaviour in question.

Initial coding produced approximately 22 items of varying strength and importance. After further reading and rereading, these were then amalgamated and/or removed to conclude with seven key themes that were of the most significance to the research. These themes were then discussed individually, as well as being utilised to form a conceptual model of self-gift

likelihood over the course of the goal setting process (Figure 3). This distinction between codes and themes, as well as the presentation of the conceptual model was in order to ensure the discussion flowed in a logical manner, and to ensure that the data spoke to the intentions of the research.

3.10 Evaluating Data Quality

Much debate around ways to confirm the quality of findings from qualitative methods of investigation has occurred, particularly in comparison to the definitively quantifiable results that are the outcome of quantitative research (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2008). Somewhat controversially, seminal authors Guba and Lincoln (Guba & Lincoln, 1981, 1982; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) substituted reliability and validity with the parallel concept of ‘trustworthiness’, containing four aspects: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, in their early research (Morse et al., 2008). This method has been selected for discussing the quality of the data as a result of this research. The intention of this is best summarised by Shenton (2004), who states that in addressing credibility, investigators attempt to demonstrate that a true picture of the phenomenon under scrutiny is being presented. To allow transferability, they provide sufficient detail of the context of the fieldwork for a reader to be able to decide whether the prevailing environment is similar to another situation with which he or she is familiar and whether the findings can justifiably be applied to the other setting. The meeting of the dependability criterion is difficult in qualitative work, although researchers should at least strive to enable a future investigator to repeat the study. Finally, to achieve confirmability, researchers must take steps to demonstrate that findings emerge from the data and not their own predispositions (Shenton, 2004).

3.10.1 Credibility

While quantitative research focuses on whether their results are valid and reliable, qualitative research outputs must be trustworthy and credible, something some researchers believe is a major challenge when a project is based upon a semi-structured interview (Hopf, 2004). According to Patton (1999), the credibility issue for qualitative inquiry depends on three distinct but related inquiry elements: rigorous techniques and methods for gathering high-quality data that are carefully analysed, with attention to issues of validity, reliability, and

triangulation; the credibility of the researcher, which is dependent on training, experience, track record, status, and presentation of self; and philosophical belief in the value of qualitative inquiry, that is, a fundamental appreciation of naturalistic inquiry, qualitative methods, inductive analysis, purposeful sampling, and holistic thinking.

Also of importance is the nature of the method and methodology in terms of credibility, as Hardie, Shilbury, Ware, and Bozzi (2010) report that in relation semi-structured interviews, validity and reliability depend not upon the repeated use of the same words in each question, but upon conveying equivalence of meaning. This is due to the acknowledgement of lexical and linguistic differences, respecting the participant and their intention to produce meaningful statements (Hardie et al., 2010). Further, when standardising the semi-structured interviews, the equivalence of meaning also helps to facilitate comparability. Another important aspect is technical rigour, as in analysis there is a heavy dependence on this aspect in the credibility of qualitative findings (Patton, 1999). Thus, to have credible data, the interviewing process must be sound, inviting the participant to produce meaningful statements as well as using technical rigour, having a credible and non-biased researcher, and setting philosophical beliefs that guide the research. In this case, these sentiments were upheld, as the credibility of research was of integral importance to the outcome of this study.

3.10.2 Transferability

The aim of research is to produce information that can be shared and applied beyond the study setting (Malterud, 2001), thus the transferability of data relates to the range and limitations for application of the study findings, beyond the context in which they were investigated. However, no study, irrespective of the method used, can provide findings that are universally transferable. The study design should show a thorough consideration of what an adequate degree of transferability would be (Malterud, 2001).

Certain ways exist in order to enhance transferability, and they relate to the notion of multiple contexts. Spiggle (1994) discusses how authors can increase the transferability of their findings, stating that in addition to multiple contexts; [they] drew their data from multiple sites, enhancing the generalizability, or transferability, of the analysis. Baxter and Eyles (1997) report on Lincoln and Guba's (1985) work, stating that purposeful sampling and thick description are two strategies/practices that can satisfy the criteria needed for transferability.

In this study, purposeful sampling was undertaken as the sample was selected from a group of mostly female women who were known to be setting physical goals. Further, this specific description allows understanding of the context that investigation occurred within.

As the objective of this study is to generate new understanding in a specific context, there are limitations around the transferability due to the lack of previous research in this area. However, the literature that informed this study covers a variety of contexts, in particular the literature surrounding self-gifting and goal setting, thus there is potential for transferability of context for findings from the interviews. The addition of utilisation of thick descriptions and purposeful sampling strengthens this element further.

3.10.3 Dependability

The nature of dependability of data is linked to the minimization of idiosyncrasies in interpretation, where variability can be tracked to identifiable sources (Baxter & Eyles, 1997). They go on to suggest that dependability includes the consistency with which the same constructs may be matched with the same phenomena over space and time but is largely concerned with documenting the research context (Baxter & Eyles, 1997). Being able to depend on the data relates most closely to the researcher, in that researchers are required to maintain consistency in interpretation in order to match phenomena with the same and appropriate constructs. As interpretation is subjective, Baxter and Eyles (1997) agree with the Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggestion that low-inference descriptors be used, as well as multiple or participant researchers to increase the dependability of data. Literally, this means a second look by another researcher in order to ensure consistency across the board.

Issues in dependability arise when analytical constructs and premises are poorly defined (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982) and premature closure occurs (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Poorly defined analytical constructs and premises become an issue when it comes to the interpretation of qualitative research, namely how it may be subject to variable interpretation by both researchers and those being researched, while premature closure occurs when the researcher finalises analytical constructs sooner than the available data warrants (Baxter & Eyles, 1997).

In this study, guidelines around interpretation were subjective to the thoughts of the researcher, however this practice was standardised and privy to observation by the supervisor of the research proceedings. This acts as an inquiry audit (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), where as outlined by Baxter and Eyles (1997) to a certain extent, the graduate student-professor supervisory relationship functions as a convenient, often implicit form of auditee-auditor research relationship. This facet of managing dependability contributes to ensuring that interpretation was appropriate and idiosyncrasies were minimised.

3.10.4 Confirmability

Confirmability of data is defined as “the degree to which findings are determined by the respondents and conditions of the inquiry and not by the biases, motivations, interests or perspectives of the inquirer” (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, pg. 290). In a literal sense, this implies that the researcher has not biased their research or its interpretation with their potentially skewed views. There is difficulty in ensuring real objectivity, as even tests and questionnaires are designed by humans, thus the intrusion of the researcher’s biases is inevitable (Shenton, 2004), as data from and about humans inevitably represents some degree of perspective rather than absolute truth. Getting close enough to the situation observed to experience it first-hand means researchers can learn from their experiences, thereby generating personal insights, but that closeness makes objectivity suspect (Patton, 1999).

Baxter and Eyles (1997) state that by incorporating concerns about the character of the data, confirmability of the data and interpretation is more broadly based than the principle(s) of objectivity, which focus solely on the accountability of the inquirer. Thus, qualitative researchers are expected to account for their interests and motivations by showing how they have affected interpretations (Baxter & Eyles, 1997). Additionally, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested focussing on the investigator as well as the interpretations in order to inform the assessment of confirmability. Methods suggested include keeping a diary, or being audited.

In this investigation, in line with the suggestion by Baxter and Eyles (1997) that at the very least, qualitative researchers need to ask some basic questions of all their work so as to assist in evaluating design and findings, personal bias was questioned. Prior to the commencement of investigation, the researcher was employed at a premium sportswear store where women

would engage in SGCB. Seeing this behaviour in action is regarded as insight rather than bias however, as this observation was integral to the investigation of the concept at hand. Further, the behaviours that were found were generally upheld in the literature, thus the interpretations were grounded in prior academic research, not just the subjective interpretation of the researcher.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

Esterberg (2002) states that researchers need to consider ethical issues surrounding a study. This largely concerns the treatment of individuals, whether the interview process was ethical, and maintaining the confidentiality of their identity and information. Prior to beginning this research, a low-risk application to the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee was made and accepted. Confirmation can be found in Appendix 4. The main aspects of this application revolved around whether or not the components of the research will cause undue harm to those involved, and the safety of their information. The criteria for a low-risk application was met, as the sensitivity of the topic was unlikely to offend those involved, and further, every attempt has been made to ensure the safety and privacy of participants.

As mentioned, during the recruitment process and prior to undertaking interviewing, participants were given an Information Sheet and asked to sign a Consent Form. The Information Sheet made clear the intent of the research, the areas that were being investigated, and gave ample contact details for those wanting to contact either the researcher or supervisor for further information. Subsequently, the intent as well as terms of privacy were outlined on the Consent Form. This form was the binding confirmation of the security of their data, and the promise that this would be upheld by all involved in the research. Further, participants were given the option to recall their data until an appropriate time, and were instructed that the nature of this thesis meant that it would become a public, published document at completion. As it stands, the measures of privacy taken include the changing of all names and identifiers to pseudonyms and all data being kept on a password protected computer. The supervisor of this research project is in possession of the physical Consent Forms, and will continue to do so for a period of seven years. All participants were consenting and content with the conditions as they were set out. As a result of these measures

and the general lack of sensitivity around these subjects, it is hoped that this research project has fulfilled all ethical criteria, and has not and will not compromise this position.

Chapter 4: Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter seeks to discuss the data collected from the fourteen semi-structured interviews conducted to gain insight regarding the topics proffered in Chapter One. To analyse the data, the process of thematic analysis was utilised, following the approach outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). Coding eventually generated six main themes, inclusive of; Pre-gifting, Earning the Gift, Tools of the Trade, Influence of Goal Importance and Commitment, Socioeconomic Influence, and the Influence of Social Comparison. Outside of this, a seventh theme of Rejecting Self-gifting is presented separately, alongside other findings from the interviews. The combination of these themes culminated in the provision of a conceptual model that aims to detail self-gifting likelihood in a reward context, in relation to the goal setting process (Figure 3). This contribution to research is a way to visually outline the findings from the research as well as contributing a platform for further investigation.

Prior to discussion of the model, background inclusive of definitions, the normalisation of SGCB and the impact of weight loss are presented. Defining self-gifting in this instance utilises definitions from each interview participant, in order to ensure they are providing information on the right topic as is contextually appropriate. Confirmation that the self-gifting behaviour discussed in interviews is conducive with prior research is also discussed due to its importance in assessing the quality of the data collected. This relates to the normalisation of the behaviour, shown in the prevalence of engagement. This is reaffirming for research in this field, as the intention is that this presentation of research findings inspires discussion and gives grounding for future research.

4.2 Background

4.2.1 Defining Self-gifting

As mentioned, Mick and DeMoss (1990a) define self-gifts as “personally symbolic self-communication through special indulgences that tend to be premeditated and highly context

bound” (pg. 322). However, to the general public, this definition and the name of the phenomenon itself are not common occurrences, and consequently may not be completely understood. As the definition states, self-gifts are a form of self-communication, and as such the concept of self-gifting needs to be one that individuals personally relate to. Further, the context dependent nature of self-gifts means that a certain item may have different meaning depending on a range of factors. Thus, defining what a self-gift is was an integral part of the research, as this also determined certain viewpoints around the topic in the participant’s eyes. This also ensures goods/services purchased are identified correctly for the purpose of this study, even if they generally use other words as descriptors. For these reasons, it was important in the interview process to ensure that self-gifting was defined by each individual in their own terms. The question ‘what is self-gifting to you?’ was broached in every interview, without any prior set-up or information provided. Overall, the responses were appropriate to the definition, and focussed on either a ‘treat’ or ‘reward’, or as a way of cheering up after a bad day, in line with the prevalent contexts and definition (Mick & DeMoss, 1990a, 1990b). Below, a selection of the interview responses is provided.

“That I’m rewarding myself for something.”

(Interview with Emily, Intermediate, age 40)

“Oh, you mean like giving yourself rewards with treats for stuff? Oh yeah, I reward myself quite often.”

(Interview with Katherine, Beginner, age 49)

“Like, buying yourself something... I suppose just general self-gifting if it's not to do with physical activity, like I allow myself something to make myself feel better if I've had a bad day.”

(Interview with Anna, Beginner, age 22)

These sentiments strongly relate to how Mick and DeMoss (1990a) define self-gifting, as well as touching on prevalent contexts such as cheering up (Luomala, 1998) or therapy (Mick

& DeMoss, 1990b). Certain definitions include a focus on the distinction between monadic and dyadic gifting in terms of the focus on the self rather than others, and how this influences behaviour.

“It's making an active choice (pause) to do something that's about you, rather than about anybody else. If it's voluntary, that's the first thing about it for me. It's something I choose to do, and I continue to choose to do... It's either a reward or a challenge. It's just about me.”

(Interview with Hannah, Beginner, age 49)

Some discussed self-gifting exclusively in relation to running and the context of physical activity, with overtones of justification as well as inferences regarding the type of gift purchased, and achievement as a necessary factor for the behaviour to occur. This aligns closely with the theme of Earning the Gift, discussed later.

“For me, it's kind of, in the context of what I'm doing now, I self-gift with my running. It would be something I want, but I certainly can't justify. It's not something I need, it's something I want. I certainly can't justify buying because it's invariably too expensive or too frivolous. But if I do something worthy like I get a new PB [personal best], or run a full marathon, do something I've not done before, so has a kind of an achievement attached to it, then I can justify buying it.”

(Interview with Rachael, Experienced. age 35)

Generally, the statements provided align with the concepts that Mick and DeMoss determined (Mick & DeMoss, 1990a, 1990b), however they show the extent to which the definition differs between individuals, often based on context or a variety of other factors. It is important to define this at the beginning of the interviews so that the highly contextual nature of the behaviour is understood and in place in each participants mind

4.2.2 Normalisation of Self-gifting Behaviour

From the interviews, further information was contributed that gave background to self-gifting, specifically in relation to the context of physical activity. Essentially, the acceptance of SGCB due to the sheer frequency of self-gifting among individuals relates to its normalisation. There was an overwhelming prevalence of individuals purchasing self-gifts in relation to the physical goals they were setting, although not exclusively in this context. While remaining highly contextual, the behaviour happens with such regularity that it appears to be considered socially acceptable, at least from anecdotal sources. Evidence from earlier research has suggested that in the Western world at least, self-gifting behaviour is on the rise (Mick & Faure, 1998) and the degree of prevalence here is clear, even beyond running.

“I suppose that it's something that I do quite regularly, there's nothing big that I've bought, no, I just do it all the time! Definitely once a month.”

(Interview with Anna, Beginner, age 22)

“Oh yeah, I've always done it. As soon as I had money, available money, I've gone and spent, disposable income, whatever.”

(Interview with Abigail, Beginner, age 45)

Individuals in this study self-gifted across all areas of their life and had been doing so for an extended period of time. Thus, the prevalence aligns with the evidence to suggest that this is a common activity. It was shown that purchases made in these situations were also conducive with previous findings. In their early work, Mick and DeMoss (1992) found that food, clothing and personal care services were the most purchased gifts in the therapy context, while the reward context indicated that clothing and travel were the most prevalent product class purchased. These tangible gifts were found to be prevalent within the individual's own experiences.

“A new hat or a new pair of pants or a manicure or a pedicure or an eyebrow wax, or eyelash tint, something like that. They'd be things I think about that I would like to do that I wouldn't normally spend money on.”

(Interview with Bianca, Experience, age 28)

Further, experience gifts were often selected as a means of self-reward. These intangible items were easier to justify for some, as they were not as self-oriented as self-specific items such as shoes or clothing. A frequently mentioned item was a trip overseas, generally in order to complete a running event. This had further justification in the way that the event was centred on running, an easily justifiable expenditure as others would partake in the activity.

It became apparent that self-gifting was a prevalent and often anticipated behaviour that was frequently engaged in throughout a variety of situations. In regards to the discussion of individuals self-gifting in a physical context, this information was useful as a way of ensuring that this was a behaviour that was actually acted on, as this relates to more accurate findings, due also to the recency of examples.

4.2.3 Increasing Self-gifting Behaviour with Weight Loss

While not a physical goal per se, running and weight loss tended to be interrelated and there is insight to be gained from the self-gifting behaviour exhibited around these areas. Many discussed their weight loss journey over the course of the running programs, the significant weight loss bringing a sense of achievement and attainment of a goal. Often, this influenced likelihood to commence self-gifting behaviour.

“Umm, yeah, well probably the last two years, I've probably self-gifted more than, than I've ever done in my life. I've been on this journey to lose weight. Just under two years ago, I was 130kg... I'm a sucker for clothing... Especially now I can buy 16s whereas before, I had to buy 26s Yeah, so I mean I, I guess I did go a bit stir crazy for a start.”

(Interview with Louise, Beginner, age 65)

Essentially, the attainment of weight loss goals is of such major personal importance for these women that weight loss and physical goals seem to act together as motivation to drive the individual forward, and to keep them engaged in the process of goal setting. This also influences the way in which they self-gift, as there is a strong feeling of deservingness, and generally, SGCB in this situation operates in a reward context. This is in line with the internal attribution, made mentioned of in Mick and Faure's (1998) model of self-gift likelihood (Figure 2). The evidence suggests that personal attribution in this manner may significantly increase the likelihood to self-gifting in a reward context, both in terms of physical activity and weight loss.

4.3 The Conceptual Model

From the interview process and subsequent thematic analysis, six main themes encompassing the insight to be gained from investigating self-gifting behaviour in a new context in combination with the goal setting process emerged. A systemic model of the goal setting process is provided below. The model visually represents the goal setting process, inclusive of times at which self-gifting behaviour can occur and the six main themes that influence the overall process of self-gifting with a reward. Further, the model highlights the cyclical nature of the goal setting process and the importance of feedback (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 1999).

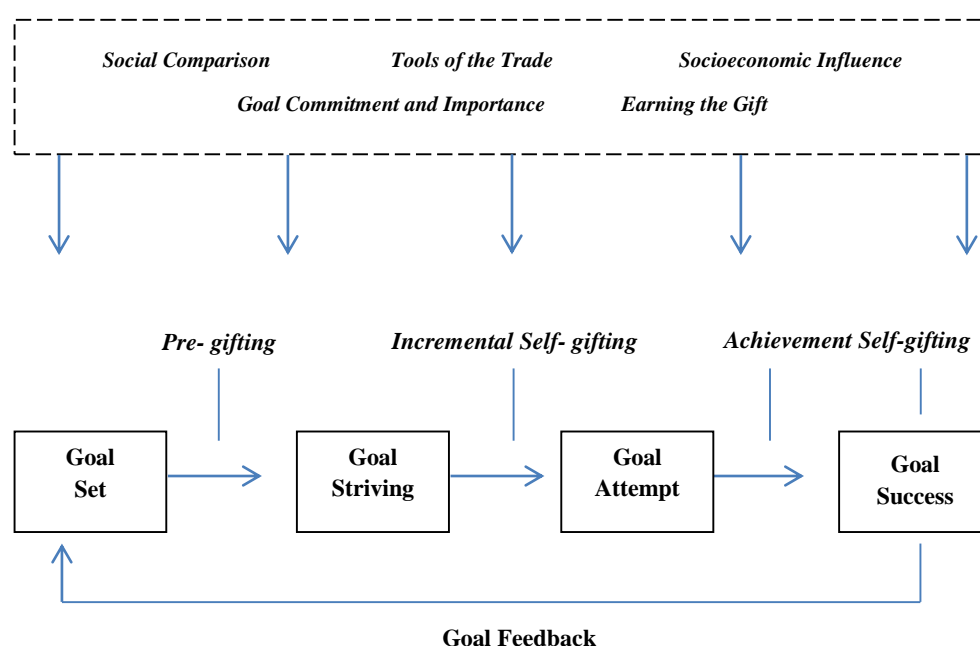


Figure 3: Likelihood of Reward Self-Gifting in Relation to the Goal Setting Process

The model will be discussed logically in order to discuss themes as they become relevant. In essence, the aim is to highlight the influential factors that relate to the goal setting process, and how these alter the likelihood of participating in reward self-gifting after achieving a set goal. This is due to the positive response to self-gifting behaviour in the research, and how the majority reported self-gifting in a reward context with little mention of therapy or other context-dependent self-gift occasions. It is hoped that highlighting self-gift likelihood in the reward context, as well as linking this to the goal setting process, provides a platform for further research and expansion.

The goal setting process is first discussed, reiterating the importance of the step-wise nature of this process, as well as how it provides three opportunities for self-gifting behaviour to occur. These are Pre-gifting, prior to the start of the goal striving process or at any other time before the goal is attempted, as well as incremental self-gifting opportunities throughout the process, and after the goal is attempted. Locke and Latham (1985) state that short-term goals can facilitate the achievement of long-term goals, due in part to the fact that goals affect performance by impacting effort, persistence, and direction of attention, and by motivating strategy development. This relates to the incremental gifting opportunities, as these small goals give a window of achievement in which reward self-gifting can take place. Certain individuals drove themselves to perform based on a set item that they had in mind and actively worked towards, the influence of which relates to self-gifting after goal success.

The goal attempt time period is of particular importance, as in this situation reaction is based on what has been described as internal or external attribution (Mick & Faure, 1998). Empirical evidence suggests that internal attributions after successful outcomes lead to higher self-esteem than external attributions (Weiner, 1985), due to the positive affirmations individuals receive knowing that their hard work has effectively paid off. It has been noted that people often give themselves rewards when they attain their goals and are proud of it (Mick & Faure, 1998), which influences SGCB as a result. However, some individuals engaged in SGCB regardless of the outcome of their goal as they felt they deserved a reward anyway. This is closely linked to Mick and Faure (1998) statement that large segments of Western adult consumers appear to believe that achievement successes in life should lead to

material comforts, some self-given. As such, the reward context is an ideal way in which to look at the influence on self-gift likelihood in relation to goal setting.

Overall, the conceptual model presented aims to combine findings from the interviews conducted, as well as drawing on previous models for support (e.g. Mick and Faure, 1998) in order to provide visual representation of reward self-gift purchase likelihood in relation to physical goal setting. The physical activity context brings with it challenges and influential factors that other contexts may lack, such as Social Comparison, Tools of the Trade, Socioeconomic Influence, Justification for Self-Gifting, Goal Importance, and Deserving. These factors can influence the process at any point, and are important considerations of how this process can be altered. They require further research, but the evidence suggests that these factors beyond others are the reasons that SGCB can have varying outcomes.

4.3.1 Goal Setting and Attempt: A Process

Prior to discussing its influence on self-gifting, the goal setting process itself must be addressed. As in the model, the goal setting process follows a stepwise procedure, namely goal setting, goal striving and goal attempt, leading to goal success. Previous models include Locke and Latham's (2002) model, named Elements of Goal-setting Theory and the High-Performance Cycle. The model follows a similar structure, utilising the goal and its influencers, prior to satisfaction with performance and rewards. Both models also contain a feedback loop, where influential factors play their part in iterating higher performance (Locke & Latham, 2002) and in driving future goal setting and attempt, as seen in Figure 1. This highlights the cyclical, systemic nature of the goal setting process, often related to goal commitment and importance, self-efficacy and feedback (Locke & Latham, 2002).

In the way that the goal setting process operates, the influence of feedback on the process is important in understanding the cyclic nature of the model and the importance that certain factors can have on outcomes. For goals to be effective, people need summary feedback that reveals progress in relation to their goals (Locke & Latham, 2002). In some instances, the evidence suggested that gifts could be seen as a way of providing feedback, albeit monadically as opposed to the normal way in which dyadic feedback is given. Certain external benchmarks such as medals were given at the conclusion of some races and they

were highly sought after by participants, who were then driven to achieve loftier goals, buoyant with positive internal attributions. Feedback may also come from others, as discussed in regard to Social Comparison, discussed later. Gift-giving is a form of communication via transfer of symbolic messages between giver and receiver, versus the personal communication of self-esteem and identity (Mick & DeMoss, 1990b) that self-gifting entails. In this way, a self-gift may be seen as a form of feedback from an individual to themselves – a way of reinforcing pride, deservingness, and the elation that they feel at achieving a goal. Further, this implies that self-gifts may also increase the likelihood of continuing with a further goal, which may again lead to self-gifting behaviour due to the cyclic nature of the process. This is evidenced by Rachael, who increased her expenditure for ‘frivolous’ or ‘unnecessary’ items based on the increase in scope of the goals that she sets.

“I’ve set myself a goal for Melbourne. If I get one forty eight in Melbourne, I can get that, well, it will be a different purse because it’s a different colour now, but I will get myself that Marc Jacobs purse. That’s worth running for... My reward for Queenstown will be a handbag. Stepping up from a purse! The handbag is going to be several hundred dollars...”

(Interview with Rachael, Experienced, age 35)

Rachael ran with strict instructions in mind of what she would reward herself with, based solely on her achievement. This behaviour occurred after the achievement of the goal, however as outlined in the model there are two extra time periods in which self-gifts have been shown to be purchased. These are aptly named Pre-gifting and Incremental Self-gifting, both discussed later.

The goal striving section of the process has no limited time frame, and can encompass a wide-ranging time period with room for self-gifting behaviour throughout. For the women completing *Extra Mile Runners* programmes, this time period was generally restricted to the eight weeks of the course, as there was a set end point at which goal success (or failure) would occur. Throughout this time, many individuals bought items they deemed self-gifts as motivation to continue, as well as to reward themselves for the work they had put in until that point.

“I bought clothes throughout and I did it on like the Saturday afternoon, like I’d do the run in the morning and then go to work, and then Saturday afternoon be like “ooh I’ve done another week” so a present.”

(Interview with Anna, Beginner, age 22)

Goal success itself relates to the timing of the outcome of the goal as perceived by the individual, namely success or failure. Fittingly, the goal is always contingent on the recipient, thus, regardless of the outcome of the goal there is room for perceived positive outcome as this is what has been shown to lead to potential self-gifting as a reward. For example, if a person ran a ten kilometre race for the first time with a goal of completing it, finishing in a certain time would not have negative implications as there may be for a more experienced runner. Goal success remains contingent on the individual, ensuring relevance on a personal level.

Support for the model can be found in a case where it did not function as intended. Rachael, who regularly purchases self-gifts as rewards, denied herself the reward she had set for herself, due to her disappointment in failing on her goal, despite an injury holding her back. This is in contrast to Mick and DeMoss’ (1998) statements, that when failed outcomes are attributed to uncontrollable causes (e.g., illness, bad luck) as compared to controllable causes (e.g., poor effort, someone’s interference), self-gifts may be more likely because gift-giving norms suggest that in such cases the person’s humanity and survivability should be endorsed.

“I still managed to finish the race in one fifty, so I got a new PB. I’d actually bruised my fifth metatarsal on my right foot. I didn’t get the time I wanted. But never mind, I didn’t get the purse. I wouldn’t let myself have the purse because I knew every time I opened it; I would feel the disappointment I felt when I finished Wanaka, which was that I didn’t finish as fast as I could have done.”

(Interview with Rachael, Experience, age 35)

Not only did Rachael feel that she had to earn the gift by completing this half marathon in the time she wanted (thus removing any feelings of deservingness or internal attribution) but she

was inherently committed to the goal she had set, and regardless of her performance under duress, was not convinced that she had achieved the goal she had set out to achieve. Without the context of reward, she did not engage in self-gifting behaviour. This behaviour is supported by Ono et al. (2012), who note that individuals purchase self-gifts in recovery for personal efforts in case of success, whereas they do not in case of failure. In a literal sense, the effort expenditure is returned via a self-gift, whereas in the achievement outcome of failure, this is deemed inappropriate.

In summary, the goal setting process is cyclical, with room for self-gifting at any stage throughout the process. It also operates in a feedback loop, with need for motivation (in the form of verbal communication from others, or presents for yourself).

4.4 Themes from the Research

4.4.1 Pre-gifting

Throughout the interview process certain women gave evidence for a new concept where they purchased prior to beginning the journey to meet their goal. This was termed ‘pre-gifting’ by one of the interview participants.

“And then I pre-gifted myself. Before I started studying, I went to Fiji. Other than that I gift myself all the time. I want it., I worked hard this week, I'm going to go ahead and get it.”

(Interview with Abigail, age 45)

Abigail personally named her identified behaviour as pre-gifting, relating to the outright purchase of a self-gift prior to the actual achievement event. Mick and DeMoss’ (1998) model of self-gift likelihood begins at the achievement outcome, rather than at points throughout the journey, thus suggesting a new concept. Whether the gift is purchased before the ‘Goal Striving’ section or at any point prior to completion, this is seen as a pre-gift. This is a reward for getting to this point and relates to the theme of deserving (Mick & Faure, 1998), as opposed to the penultimate point of the process. This may have implications for the

significance of the gift, as the context has yet to acquire the achievement outcome and related emotions that the achievement of the final goal entails.

Almost exclusively, gifts purchased as pre-gifts were related to running, such as shoes or running apparel, with studies showing that luxury items or other types of self-gifts are common (Heath et al., 2011; Mick & DeMoss, 1990b).

“I think I got shoes before the five, so I knew, because I made that goal that I wanted to start running at some point, but I needed better shoes.”

(Interview with Samantha, age 22)

“Umm, I bought the shoes before I started... before I started the five km”

(Interview with Emily, age 40)

These items were related to running, but also to do with giving the individuals the motivation to get over the start line. They were seen as a reward for just starting for some, coupled with their justification that these items were necessary to undertake this new hobby. The gift of shoes was also arguably necessary in order to complete the program, although many that bought shoes mentioned that they did in fact own shoes that could have been used instead.

The timing and preconception of the self-gifting behaviours these women exhibited provides a new way of looking at their motivation, how they justify certain purchases, and what types of gifts push them toward their goals. In this way, linking motivation, achievement, and goal setting with a specific gift and time to purchase has implications for many groups, inclusive of advertising and marketing executives.

4.4.2 Earning the Gift

Motivation to achieve can be influenced by a range of internal or external factors with varying outcomes on performance, mostly dependent on context (Locke, 1968). The notion of Earning the Gift was mentioned on a number of occasions, and was closely linked to

achievement for some, and also to the specific gifts that were purchased. As mentioned, self-gifts are perceived to be earned (Kivetz & Simonson, 2002) after “personal effort and achievement” (Mick & DeMoss, 1990b, pg. 326) and the kinds of achievement-oriented contexts that pervade daily life (e.g., career and home tasks; leisure sports) appear to readily precipitate self-gifts (Mick & Faure, 1998). Within the context of physical activity particularly, the running programme was likely to influence SGCB through providing context and timing for engaging in SGCB. The concept of Earning the Gift relates to the notion of deserving, as mentioned by participants.

“I had a really grotty old pair of running shoes and I went and got myself a good pair of shoes. That was part of a self-gift. I felt that I'd earned it, and I was going to start doing this more seriously. I'd earned it. I've not ever been very good at earning stuff.”

(Interview with Harriet, age 50)

“Kind of like the coffee at the end of a run, like I've earned this coffee so I'm going to have it.”

(Interview with Abigail, age 45)

The participants spoke of ‘earning’ their rewards, almost as a justification for something they feel they may not need to be doing. This is likely due to the fact that many see the purchases they made as ‘frivolous’ and a ‘want not a need’. Perhaps the strongest association with Earning the Gift came from Rachael, a stay at home mother who had just run her first full marathon. This achievement was an enormous accomplishment for her, but most interesting is the motivation and drive she received from her personal promise of a pre-empted self-gift at the completion of the race.

“As I was training for the half, that's when I then realised that if I do this, I get to treat myself at the end of this. That was a motivating factor, as well. That is probably a goal to a certain degree as well, but that's more my carrot, my motivator”.

(Interview with Rachael, age 35)

Certain items took on such significance to the individuals that they felt as if they were either Earning the Gift by physically working toward it, or that they had earned the reward they wanted with the work they had put in, conducive with the theme of deservingness (Mick & Faure, 1998). It is clear that these items also served as practical, useful items to help them towards achievement. This is obvious with the nature of the items purchased such as shoes and running apparel as these items did actually serve a practical purpose. Fittingly, Mick and DeMoss (1992) identified practical gifts as most prevalent in the reward context.

“Usually, if I was self-gifting, it would be practical. It would be directly running related. It would be where you could go and buy all these different flavoured gels and try them all out. When it came to the running stuff, I could see it was really practical for me, therefore it was okay to buy it. I wouldn't have to feel guilty about buying it because it was a real positive thing in my life that I was doing, and a healthy thing. That was pretty, yeah, pretty self-fulfilling.”

(Interview with Samantha, age 22)

“Because the running stuff is useful, it's practical. It's going to serve my, what I'm working on.”

(Interview with Harriet, age 50)

With items such as shoes, the influence of the goal here is that while these women had purchased shoes previously, they felt justified in their decision to purchase top of the line, personally fitted shoes, as opposed to their usual purchases. They saw podiatrists, had shoes personally fitted, and sometimes purchased multiple pairs. What was clear though was that for some, they specifically linked their running gifts to motivating them for running, and their other types of gifts to be related to other, specific contexts. For example; selecting running shoes as a reward for completing a running event versus the purchase of a hairdryer after completing a hairdressing qualification.

“I wouldn't have bought shoes and a watch if I didn't think I was going to keep my running up. Like if 5km had been my end goal then I never wanted to run again, I would've bought myself a dress because I'd lost a dress size while I was doing the run, not something for the run.”

(Interview with Anna, age 22)

It seems as if there is a direct correlation in the individual's minds between running and being able to justify specific running related gifts. Their repeated use justified their purchase, almost as if they earn the right to purchase them with the time they are spent in use. Examples of these are prevalent and are often linked to purchases of exercise clothing or related items. Again, the concept of purchasing an item out of their usual price consideration was mentioned. It seems as if the context overcomes any initial reservations about purchasing items that may be expensive, or that they have not purchased before.

An experienced runner, Rachael self-gifted with items she described as ‘frivolous’ such as expensive shoes or handbags. As a stay at home mother, she regarded these items as things that are unattainable for her in her everyday life, although she acknowledged that this is directly related to financial factors, and that she would purchase what she wanted at will if she had a job, and did so prior to having children. In this way, the attempt and nature of the goal is enough of an achievement for Rachael to not only justify certain running-oriented gifts, but those above and beyond the running context that she feels she would have earned or deemed appropriate for purchase without the goal. Earning the Gift is an important notion to consider as it is likely more apparent due to the physical nature of the goal. The participants felt that they have physically earned the gift, due to the commitment of their time, their hours on the pavement, and their energy during races. While this does not necessarily predict self-gift likelihood in this context of physical activity, the feeling of deservingness or not is likely to impact self-gift likelihood regardless of context. What also became clear is that like the goal setting process or self-gifting process, the importance and view of this factor is highly contingent for each individual.

4.4.3 Tools of the Trade

One of the influencing factors on likelihood to self-gift has been deemed ‘Tools of the Trade’. While the same items were frequently purchased (running shoes, GPS watches, running apparel, the programme itself), there was a variety of differing individual characteristics that determined whether these items were a self-gift or not, as identified by the participant. Frequently, more experienced individuals did not view such items as self-gifts. The ‘specialness’ (Faure & Mick, 1993) of items that may have once been deemed self-gifts has diminished and these purchases become more routine.

“No, for me, running, it's pricey, adds up as my husband reminds me... It is expensive, but I see that as necessary to do the running. I don't see that as a treat for running... Huge cost, but for me, that's what, if I was going to run a full marathon, that's what it costs to do that. That's not a treat for me.”

(Interview with Rachael, Experienced, age 35)

These items (deemed self-gifts by others) are seen as necessary for the goal they set out to achieve. Often at higher levels, individuals expressed that they desired better or more technical gear in order to push them further toward their goal. This is an extension of the mind-set, as they not only purchased better and often more expensive gear, but saw this type of expenditure as much less of a gift than it had the potential to be. This is exhibited by experienced runners below.

“See I like buying the right gear. I like to umm, be comfortable. And, see like now I need some more running shoes so I'll be going out and buying another pair. Umm, I think it's important to make sure you have got the right gear.”

(Interview with Elizabeth, Experienced, age 49)

“Protein powder, I'll buy that if we need it. Those are, running things and fitness things I deem as essential things... so three hundred for a pair of shoes is quite a lot to pay for a pair of shoes that you're only going to use six months, but I don't see it as being expensive because you need them. You need proper footwear to run properly.”

(Interview with Bianca, Experienced, age 28)

What becomes apparent here, and what was directly stated in one interview, is that these items become less of a self-gift and more of a “tool of the trade”. They are deemed necessary and important to continue running, rather than a special expenditure. For beginner runners, these items are much more contextually significant, and have a more emotive impact than for experienced runners.

“It's umm, to me, if you don't have the right tools to do something, then you're not going to do your best and umm, when I started, I mean I had nothing. Umm, because I feel if you, if you're going to do something, then you know, you, you really need to have the right equipment to do it with. So I don't, you know, I don't consider my shoes self-gifting. I consider them [to be] tools of the trade.”

(Interview with Louise, Beginner, age 65)

The difference in mind-set between age groups also became apparent, particularly in comparison to those younger individuals who are looking for an opportunity to self-gift without guilt or regret. What is interesting is the significance of certain items to some compared to others, which seems to be based on a variety of factors. In this way, self-gift likelihood can be influenced by each individual's relationship with not only the idea of self-gifting, but their construal of ‘specialness’, an essential aspect of a self-gift (Faure & Mick, 1993). This serves to further highlight the contextual nature of self-gifts, in line with Mick and DeMoss (1990b) statements on how utilitarian products can become self-gifts based heavily on context. The practical nature of these items to some, show that their attitude is the difference between a self-gift and not, altering the likelihood over any stage of the process.

4.4.4 Influence of Goal Importance and Commitment

Goal Commitment and Importance relate to the experience that individuals have with running, and how important this goal is in regards to their self-identity and self-esteem, as well as moderating the likelihood to self-gift if commitment is lacking. For beginner runners, the goal of running the certain distance as dictated in the programme they attended was of paramount importance, as they did not believe that they could have ever achieved such a lofty goal. This relates to the notion of the hard versus specific goal, where hard goals increase performance (Locke, 1968). For more experienced runners, simply running the distance is of less importance as they are aware of their capabilities, thus the goal shifts to alternatives such as improving time. The importance of achievement is clear in statements regarding their feelings crossing the finishing line on the final day of their first programme. This was a significant achievement for these women and they were at times overcome by the emotional aspect of achieving something that they thought was impossible.

“Found some energy to run extra at the end. Was met at the line by my husband and I burst into tears. I’ve seen a lot of tears at the finish line... It’s really quite, it’s a very emotive time.”

(Interview with Harriet, Intermediate, age 50)

“Finishing was pretty good. I sprinted the last few meters, well, as much as I could sprint. It was really cool. I could see it was such a big thing. You sort of felt you’d won the Olympics but not quite.”

(Interview with Katherine, Beginner, age 49)

Just as evident was the commitment of the beginner runners, who placed significant importance on the programme. For them, this was often the first time that they had exercised or committed to an exercise program in many years, if not for the first time ever. The goal–performance relationship is strongest when people are committed to their goals (Locke & Latham, 2002) as if there is no commitment, a goal can have no motivational effect (Locke et al., 1981).

“Through the programme, I was, for that first one I was really rigid about it. I had it on my fridge; I had it in two places, the program. I had it on my fridge and I had it on the back of my door at work. I literally had stickers. I had little blue dolphins and star fish and stuff, and every time I went to a session, I'd put a sticker on, and I knew, I don't think for that first one, I don't think I missed a session. I was just really vigilant about sticking to it.”

(Interview with Hannah, Beginner, age 49)

4.4.5 Socioeconomic Influence

Drawing on the concept of money as an influential aspect on the ability or likelihood to self-gift, the interviews suggested that this is heavily impactful on behaviour. This is in line with Mick and DeMoss' (1992) statement that propensity to engage in self-gifting behaviours are correlated with socioeconomic variables such as age, current financial situation, and gender. For this reason, socioeconomic influence is placed in the section of the model with other influencing factors as the impact of socioeconomic influence can alter behaviour at any stage of the process. While periods of having extra money have been defined as one of the contexts highly related to the likelihood to self-gift (McKeage, Richins, & Debevec, 1993; Mick & DeMoss, 1990b), if access to money is restricted then behaviours may be impacted as a result.

“I've got a mortgage now so that controls the finances a bit more... And a student loan”

(Interview with Abigail, Beginner, age 45)

“I, certainly in recent times, I can't think where I would self-gift outside of running. I definitely would have done it pre-children, and certainly in my twenties, because I didn't have kids, money might not have been quite so tight.”

(Interview with Rachael, Experienced, age 35)

However apparent the impact of external factors such as money were, for some this was seen only as a challenge to manoeuvre around, as was the case with Bianca, an experienced runner.

“It's worth the cost of what it is. I would make our budget fit around that for us to do those kinds of things”

(Interview with Bianca, Experienced, age 28)

This is likely due to the importance placed on the goal, particularly in such an achievement oriented context. Further, the concept of ‘Earning the Gift’ is related, as the data infers that this is a way of justifying particular behaviours, over and above financial or other constraint.

4.4.6 Influence of Social Comparison

In the context of interpersonal gift giving, Lowrey et al. (2004) state that previous research does not systematically or comprehensively examine how third parties within the giver’s social network can influence dyadic giving, although there is an obligation to give, receive and repay (Belk, 1976; Mauss, 1954) which indicates a degree of social pressure. Further, Wooten (2000) demonstrates that givers are more anxious and pessimistic about how their gifts will be received when multiple participants act as givers and witnesses to ritual gift exchanges, clarifying the importance of social conformity. As clothing was a frequently purchased item, it is not surprising that mention was made of looking and in turn, feeling the part.

“Putting on your awesome running jacket and feeling the part definitely helped.”

(Interview with Samantha, Beginner, age 22)

Certain elements of what can be described as peer pressure were evident for some. There was a strong sense of community within the groups, and many attributed the social aspect of the programmes to be what held them accountable and ensured they continued to turn up. This is in line with statements by Dishman et al (1985) regarding the impact of social reinforcement on commitment. Being surrounded by others with similar goals meant that their influence was clear to see, and the visibility of self-gifting within the group was one way in which social comparison could operate.

“I would say it's massively visible. It's not like we go running and go, “what are you going to get yourself”, but I mean, it may come up in conversation, or it may come up after the event. Somebody will come up, yeah, you know, new shoes or whatever, and somebody will say, “Yeah, I decided I ran that race well”, or whatever.”

(Interview with Rachael, Experienced, age 35)

As a part of this, the importance placed on certain gifts and how these were often shown off at the group can be attributed to how people are bonded to the group, as they feel included when they had purchased similar items, or were part of a group that had a running-specific item such as a GPS watch.

“My sister bought herself some shoes when she hit the 5km but I don't think she ever wore them. I made sure everyone saw mine! It was quite funny because I showed one of the trainers my watch and she was like “oh my god did you get engaged?” and I was like, yeah, in March”. And she was like “oh my god so you've been engaged the whole time” and I was like, yeah, but look at my watch! And she just wandered off after that. So I definitely made sure people knew about it.”

(Interview with Anna, Beginner, age 22)

Given the difference in the gift-giving process between interpersonal and self-gifting, there are a few key differences that may relate to certain aspects of these processes. For example, when a gift is given to a receiver, there is a window for feedback and reflection on the communicative aspect of the exchange. Within the literature, gift-giving has been seen as an opportunity to express the giver's perception of both him or herself and the receiver, or more broadly, as complex movements in the management of meaning (Schwartz, 1967; Wolfinbarger, 1990). When the gift is given to you, by you, then the feedback process is purely personal. There is no external feedback or anyone to judge whether or not this is anything but a perfect, well intentioned, and often well researched gift. Thus, if others do comment then there is a need to further research the social comparison related implications of self-gift purchases. The importance of these gifts are clear, as shown by Anna above, but what is not known is how Anna, or anyone else for that matter, would react if criticism about

her purchases occurred. These self-gifts hold such personal importance and are of such a highly contextual nature that they align with self-identity gifts (Sherry, 1983). For these women, the gifts are also often a symbol of their achievements and commitment to the goal, further implicating their part in their identity and their communication of self to others. Being the type of person that had a GPS watch for running or a specific type of running shoe made these women feel included, and showed part of their new view of themselves. What requires further investigation is what happens if the GPS watch they purchase is a brand or model looked down upon by the rest of the group, as this potential for cognitive dissonance could alter the relationship with self-gifts and further alter individual likelihood to self-gift in the future.

4.5 Other Findings

4.5.1 Rejecting Self-gifting

While many related to self-gifting as a normal, almost routine behaviour, certain individuals did not. While differences in acceptance of gifting oneself occur across cultures (Joy, 2001; Tynan et al., 2010), research has yet to suggest reasons for rejecting the phenomenon. Mick and DeMoss (1990a) touch on how gifts to other people can serve as gifts to oneself, insofar as personal pleasure is anticipated and derived from observing the gift receiver's happiness. Seemingly, self-gifting behaviour was viewed as a selfish pursuit and not an appropriate choice for some. As evidenced by the statements below, these women declared that they preferred giving to others as opposed to gifting themselves.

“For me, buying stuff for myself definitely doesn't feel as good as buying something for someone else, or going and having a drink with someone, or a really nice meal, or a piece of cake, or something like that. That's quite a lot higher in value to me than buying nail polish.”

(Interview with Samantha, Beginner, age 22)

It became apparent from their body language and discussion that some women felt particularly uncomfortable about the idea of gifting themselves. Mention of children and other socioeconomic factors were frequent, due to their influence on financial constraints.

Further, mentioned above is that general interpersonal gift giving itself can be a means of communication. For Sabrina, the communicative aspect of a self-gift did not align with her views of herself.

“Umm, I can’t, no, I can’t think of anything. Umm, although I’m on my own now, umm, I’ve never had spare money to do things with. Even when the children were little, the money would go to them and you’d go and, you’d go to buy something for yourself in town and you’d come home with three pairs of socks for children. Umm, that’s the mother thing but umm, I can’t think of doing anything special for me.”

(Interview with Sabrina, Beginner, age 70)

“I probably spend too much money on my kids. I, I think I’m indulgent. Am I indulgent, Isabel? Given that you’ve got new shoes since you’ve been home. You’ve got a new bra since you’ve been home. I bought you a new bikini since you’ve been home and you’ve only been home since Wednesday... Because I work long hours, I don’t get to see my kids that often and it’s sort of slightly sad always going shopping on your own.”

(Interview with Victoria, Intermediate, age 58)

Feelings of guilt towards rewarding yourself rather than others were also apparent but not outwardly mentioned. In their study, Dahl, Honea, and Manchanda (2003) found that a large number of respondents experienced guilt because their consumption actions resulted in some sort of personal standards failure, indicating that their actions were contrary to personal commitments and outlined goals, including buying products that were harmful to one's health and undertaking frivolous purchases of expensive clothing, jewellery, make-up, technological products, and entertainment. While this was not in relation to self-gifting, there are obvious links between purchasing items for oneself and feelings of guilt.

This concept further aligned with Mick and DeMoss’ (1992) statements around the decrease in propensity to self-gift with age, conducive with research by McKeage et al. (1993) who made similar findings. This is likely to be the cause of these individuals rejecting self-gifting, as those that displayed these concerns were aged 65 years and over.

“You know, the kids have grown up and grandkids are grown up and, I mean I’ve got grandsons that are nearly 17 so umm, you know, they’re almost independent now. I still treat them a little bit though when their mother’s not looking but umm, I get as much satisfaction out of treating them as I would buying myself something and I’m happy doing that and that gives me a wee buzz and I know that, I mean it makes things easier for their mother as well.”

(Interview with Louise, Beginner, age 65)

While they outwardly disagree with the concept, this is not to say that women who stated that they preferred to give to others did not engage in self-gifting behaviour by purchasing items. Rather they would mention the range of items they had purchased but had been able to justify in other ways. Examples of this include their propensity to purchase experience gifts, such as trips to compete in overseas races as discussed in regard to the normalisation of self-gifting behaviour above.

4.5.2 Self-gifting in the Future

Linking this type of physical goal to likelihood to self-gift requires looking ahead to the future, thus participants were asked whether or not they expected this behaviour to continue. Results were mixed, with advanced runner Rachael stating that she would keep up her shoe and bag habit, and did not see an end to her self-gifting behaviour.

“I think I’ll probably still be doing it, to be honest. I’ll still probably be quite strict about it, as I was with Wanaka. If I don’t achieve what I set out to achieve, well then you don’t get.”

(Interview with Rachael, Experience, age 35)

As an advanced runner, she had attained a standard of physical fitness that beginner runner Abigail had yet to reach. In this case, the concept of being further advanced with running was seen as an impediment to gifting. As long runs or races become more routine, Abigail hoped that the associated significance in regards to gifting would abate.

“I’d actually almost hope by then, if I’m five years still running, I would hope that’s just become part of my life, my daily routine. If I self-reward every day, it’ll get quite expensive! Like, if I did a race, I would self-reward after that. If I just went out for a run, then no.”

(Interview with Abigail, Beginner, age 45)

This concept has yet to be documented in the sense that with higher levels of attainment, that rewards become less important, due to the lack of research of the context of physical activity. As mentioned, those starting out are more likely to purchase items to motivate, and aim to be part of a group, as well as being more likely to gift at points in time where they feel they have achieved above and beyond what they thought was possible. Ultimately, for beginners more viable time periods when gifting can occur are available. For more experienced runners, their motivation and set goal was often different from the outset as it shifted to a more time-based and specific focus and gifting was often less prevalent as a result. Differentiating levels of experience requires further research in order to determine why this may alter the likelihood of SGCB occurring.

4.6 Evaluating Data Quality

In line with the discussion in Chapter Three around evaluating data quality, an assessment of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability was implemented. An important aspect of evaluating data quality in this instance is the relationship between findings in this investigation and those of previous studies. In terms of credibility, the three inquiry elements required are rigorous techniques and methods for gathering data, credibility of the researcher, and philosophical believe in the value of qualitative research (Patton, 1999). In this way, this method of investigation satisfies these elements through the use of an acceptable methodology (thematic analysis) and method of data collection (semi-structured interviews), as well as confirming credibility of the researcher and fundamental beliefs through consultation with a supervisor. This second opinion ensures credibility of the data and the study, as it removes the single-mindedness of a researcher on their own.

Further, the transferability of the data relates to the ability to share findings beyond this context. As the nature of the findings relate specifically to the reward context for self-gifting

behaviour, this is a narrow field that has limited transferability outside of the context of physical activity without further investigation. What is transferable is the way in which the goal setting process can be influenced by various elements. Certain themes from the research can be seen as transferable between contexts however, as generally they relate to achievement as a whole. Thick description was utilised to the best of the researcher's ability in order to contribute the most useful discussion of these themes for further research.

Dependability of the data relates to the minimisation of idiosyncrasies in interpretation (Baxter & Eyles, 1997), thus efforts were made to ensure constructs were clearly defined to avoid possible issues. As mentioned, themes were subjective to the thoughts of the researcher and as a result, this practice was standardised and privy to observation by the supervisor in order to minimise any issues in interpretation.

Finally, semi-structured interviewing and thematic analysis are designed in order to let the data speak for itself, without restrictive questions or attempt to draw specific themes from the data collected. These factors influence the confirmability of data, and while there is difficulty in ensuring real objectivity (Shenton, 2004), measures were put in place to ensure bias was removed. Importantly, all interpretation and findings were conducive with the supervisor's thoughts on the outcome, providing a more well-rounded view of the data and reducing issues in data quality as much as possible.

4.7 Summary of Findings

Throughout the interview process, it became clear that self-gifting is engaged in frequently and the findings seemed to support the proposition that setting physical goals is likely to impact on self-gifting behaviours. This is due in part to the prevalence of self-gifting as a reward for achievement and deserving. Thus, at the end of this chapter sufficient evidence has been put forward from the data collected to inform a greater understanding of reward oriented self-gifting consumer behaviour in the context of physical activity. However, there are many factors that influence increases or decreases in the likelihood of self-gifting, the behaviour remains highly context specific.

Likelihood to self-gift in relation to the goal setting process has been conceptualised in a model (Figure 3) in order to try to better understand the influences on this outcome, specifically but not limited to the context of physical activity. The themes produced through thematic analysis (inclusive of: Pre-Gifting, Earning the Gift, Tools of the Trade, Influence of Goal Importance and Commitment, Socioeconomic Influence, and the Influence of Social Comparison) are combined in this model. They show the likelihood of a reward self-gift at varying points between setting a goal and the outcome of the goal (Goal Success), as well as the influential factors throughout this process. While there was no one set context or achievement that guaranteed its occurrence, consistent with the highly contextual nature of the behaviour, efforts have been made to conceptualise the process. This platform is a way of combining the outcomes of the research, and to utilise the themes in a way that can inform further research.

While some of these themes have been observed in previous research, others provide new information that can be utilised to gain further insight moving forward. Notable findings include the existence of ‘Pre-gifting’, in which individuals gift themselves prior to beginning working toward a goal, far prior to its completion. This requires further investigation, but creates a context that marketers can leverage to target their products to those looking for inspiration to begin their journey. Further, the ‘Tools of the Trade’ theme sheds light on how certain items are viewed as gifts by certain individuals but not others, a relationship that also appears to be related to ability. A full discussion of these themes and further implications are presented in Chapter Five.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

Seminal authors Mick and DeMoss (1990a; 1990b; 1992) report many findings from their early work, the majority of which forms the basis for all further investigation in this field. Thus, the intention of this research was to marry the phenomenon of self-gifting with goal setting in the context of physical activity, a combination of topics which have yet to be investigated. Previous chapters have discussed the multiple facets of this study, inclusive of a review of literature, discussion of the methodology utilised, and an overview of the findings from the data collected. This chapter seeks to combine these elements, culminating in a discussion related to the original research questions, new findings, and the consequent academic and practical implications. Themes from the interviews will be discussed, prior to a presentation of future research directions and limitations for the present investigation.

5.2 Summary and Discussion of Findings

Research questions were formulated as a result of the study's intention, related to the physical nature of the goals and the goal setting process itself. This influence was later found to be implicated with self-gifting behaviour in a variety of ways. Indication from the research supports the frequent utilisation of reward self-gifts after achievement (e.g. achieving a goal) as well as how this relates to the systemic nature of the goal setting process. At any stage throughout the process of setting, striving, attempting and the eventual outcome of the goal, self-gifting behaviour was implicated as a way of rewarding for achievements that were 'deserved'. The conceptual model of these relationships visually outlined the process, inclusive of a variety of differing influential factors that can increase or decrease likelihood to self-gift throughout the process. These findings relate specifically to the context of physical activity in this instance, but may prove transferable to other achievement based contexts with further investigation.

Further findings showed the frequency of engaging in, as well as the normality of self-gifting behaviour, in line with previous statements that this behaviour was increasing (Mick & Faure, 1998). This may be due to the prevalence of reward contexts in this sample, as this is one of

the top two contexts in which self-gifting behaviour is likely to occur within (Mick & DeMoss, 1990a, 1990b). Many of the participants interviewed were forthcoming with the frequency at which they rewarded, and the importance of this behaviour to them, particularly in regard to achieving goals.

As an exception to this behaviour, certain individuals did not identify with the act of self-gifting, viewing it as a selfish activity. They were generally towards the older end of the age spectrum, which supports statements around the decrease in propensity to self-gift with age (McKeage et al., 1993; Mick & DeMoss, 1992). These participants tended to prefer giving gifts to others and got a ‘buzz’ out of doing so. Alternatively, they continued to purchase similar items to those that identified with self-gifting as a behaviour they partook in, but did so with an alternative viewpoint to this act of consumption. This notion relates to one of the main themes, ‘Tools of the Trade’.

Tools of the Trade emerged as a theme when this sentiment was expressed by a 65 year old participant who viewed purchases such as shoes, running apparel, and entrance fees for races as part of the ‘tool-kit’ needed to perform the task at hand. What differs here is that items purchased in this way were found to be frequently purchased self-gifts by other participants as well as in the literature, as commonly purchased product types across all contexts were clothing, fast-food or grocery food, non-fast-food-restaurants, music products and personal care service (Mick & DeMoss, 1992). This theme is a way of approaching consumer’s personal motivations for self-gifting, why certain items are not deemed appropriate, or why the behaviour itself is seen as inappropriate by certain individuals. This also seeks to reinforce the highly contextual nature of SGCB.

The themes implicated in this research paved the way for a conceptual model to be formed. The model (Figure 3) provides a way in which self-gifting in a reward context can be discussed, with the addition of influential factors and opportunities for self-gifting behaviour in a range of time frames. As is shown, there are five influential themes that can alter self-gift purchase, either increasing or decreasing likelihood as a result of their impact. For instance, Social Comparison as a theme makes clear the impact of both the feedback loop and the communicative aspect of self-gifts, as well as likelihood to engage in self-gifting due to peer

pressure from the programme's group environment. Peer pressure in this sense has yet to be discussed in this way, however the research suggests that social comparison may alter the communicative element of a self-gift. This relates to how feedback can influence interpersonal gift giving, as there is often much pressure and distress around selecting an appropriate item due to the concern for the impact of the gift exchange (Sherry et al., 1993). This is due to the view that gift giving is seen as an opportunity to express the giver's perception of both him or herself and the receiver (Schwartz, 1967; Wolfinbarger, 1990). In comparison, self-gifts are seen as a perfect gift to oneself, selected with emphatic accuracy (Mick & DeMoss, 1990b). However, with the shift from dyadic to monadic communication in this scenario, the only feedback around the gift is personal perception. Thus, there may be potential for negative comments to alter the individual's viewpoint around the self-gift, reducing its importance or relation to self-identity (Sherry, 1983). Discussion has implicated that acceptance or rejection of a gift can be a conscious affirmation of selfhood (Schwartz, 1967) as gifts can project the ideal self (Belk, 1976) in interpersonal gift giving. However, this outcome is subjective in a self-gifting context. Thus, negative social comparison may have serious and wide ranging implications for individuals engaging in SGCB, particularly if they reward themselves for achievement, due to the generally positive connotations around these gifts and their resulting influence on self-esteem (Kauppinen-Räsänen et al., 2014).

Socioeconomic factors demonstrated significant influence on self-gift likelihood, as has been found in previous studies. Mick and DeMoss (1992) noted that demographic factors inclusive of current financial condition compared to a year ago, education level, marriage status, and age, amongst others, impacted levels of engagement in self-gifting behaviour. Further, current financial position was found to be positively related to every self-gift propensity (Mick & DeMoss, 1992). This was supported in the findings, with many participants mentioning that they had financial constraints such as mortgages that influenced their ability to self-gift. This further highlights the importance they place on self-gifting and the potential prevalence of this behaviour if no constraints existed. This notion aligns with the context of extra money (Mick & DeMoss, 1990b), also upheld in this study, as individuals reported engaging in such behaviour seemingly just for the sake of it, if financially viable. The concept of age has been found to relate to a decrease in self-gifting propensity as discussed (Mick and DeMoss, 1992), while increase in self-gifting for those unmarried (Mick and DeMoss, 1992), demonstrated how marriage status was also implicated in influencing self-

gifting behaviour. These aspects have been placed in an overarching region above the goal setting process in the model, as similar to how self-gifting behaviour can occur at any stage of the process, the impact of such factors can have the same impact on the outcome at any given time.

While older age and budget constraints are implicated in a reduction in likelihood to self-gift, the theme 'Earning the Gift' has the opposite effect, relating to an increase based on feelings of deservingness and achievement. Earning the Gift arose as a means of explaining the way in which certain individuals were able to justify almost any expenditure, due to the fact that they felt so strongly that they deserved a reward. Often this led to incremental gifting, as outlined in the model, as throughout the course of the programme (generally the length of the goal striving stage), opportunities became appropriate for SGCB to occur given the milestones these periods in time represented. For instance, running the farthest distance in the programmes so far was a short-term goal on the way to the final outcome, but the feeling of deservingness at this point was enough for some to warrant a self-gift, prior to completion or actual goal success. Gifts were often linked to the physical context, as again they were easy to justify (due to their 'practical' nature) and motivated individuals further towards their goals. However, in certain cases, the feeling of deservingness was strong enough that self-gifts did not need to relate to physical context at all. Often in relation to failure, self-gifting may still occur in a therapy context (Mick & DeMoss, 1990b) or as a mood alleviation strategy (Luomala & Laaksonen, 1999). However, the strength in Earning the Gift seemingly overcame this, as evidenced by restraint from purchasing preconceived self-gifts after an unsuccessful outcome.

Related to Earning the Gift is the impact of goal commitment and importance. This theme was derived from the nature of certain responses in regard to the strength of individual desire to continue with the programme, but mainly in regard to differences in ability. Within the context of physical activity there was a variation in running experience that at times influenced likelihood to self-gift and related notions, such as what was deemed a self-gift. With individuals at the beginner level, their experience with physical activity was generally limited (for some these programmes were the first period of regular exercise in years) and as a result, the importance of the goal and consequent commitment to it was increased. This in

turn related to their higher frequency to self-gift in comparison to more experienced runners. Those at intermediate or experienced level essentially lost some of the contextual elements in relation to physical goals as they had become commonplace. Thus, rewarding was less frequently utilised for goal achievement compared to beginners, who tended to feel as if they deserved rewards continually; prior to starting, at various time points throughout the goal striving phase, as well as after goal success. For a beginner, completing a five kilometre race may have a strong significance for self-efficacy, self-identity and self-esteem, whereas this distance may only be viewed as a regular training run for an experienced runner, not requiring attention or reward. The differences become apparent in regard to the Tools of the Trade theme consequently, given that shoes and running apparel are seen as necessary items for experienced runners in contrast to their motivating factors and rewards for hard work with beginners. The differences here require further research due to the lack of literature related to differing ability and likelihood to self-gift.

Moreover, experienced runners tended to engage in self-gifting behaviour after the goal success stage (if at all). This is shown in the conceptual model, as self-gifting behaviour in a reward context is obviously related to the outcome of the task to be achieved. For beginners (although not exclusively), as well as incremental gifting a new concept was brought to light from the research entitled 'Pre-gifting', in which gifts are purchased prior to beginning work toward the goal (Goal Striving). As with Tools of the Trade, the moniker was assigned by a participant in the research, who stated that this was a behaviour she had engaged in as a way to reward herself for starting a new task that she deemed important. Timing had a specific part to play in some of the instances of Pre-gifting as items such as shoes were required before starting the programme out of actual need, however the concept sheds light on the range of times and contexts in which self-gifting behaviour can take place.

The above discussion of themes has given an overview regarding the outcome of the research, as well as discussing the conceptual model and how this relates to the behaviour. The academic and practical implications will now be discussed, using the findings as a base.

5.3 Academic Implications

To the knowledge of the researcher no studies exist combining the topics of goal setting and self-gifting in a physical activity context. Further, motivation studies provide the basis for understanding consumer behaviour (Kauppinen-Räsänen et al., 2014). The topics of gift-giving and goal setting, and self-gifting to a slightly lesser extent, possess prior models, processes, and findings grounded in evidence from the literature. Thus, the addition of knowledge to these combined areas has academic implications for future research.

At an overarching level, this study provides support for previous findings due to the provision of similar observations within a new context. In this way, it also relates to the transferability of the data. Support for statements regarding age and decreased likelihood to self-gift (McKeage et al., 1993; Mick & DeMoss, 1992), types of gifts purchased (Mick & DeMoss, 1992), the prevalence of the reward context (Mick & DeMoss, 1990a, 1990b), varying impact of socioeconomic factors (Mick & DeMoss, 1992), as well as the influence of gender on likelihood to self-gift have been found. Women have been continually found to be more likely to self-gift than males (Luomala & Laaksonen, 1999; Mick & DeMoss, 1992) in virtually every category (Ward & Tran, 2008) and the sheer prevalence of self-gifting behaviour within this all female sample strengthened evidence for this relationship.

Moreover, the major implication of this research is the contribution of a conceptual model related to reward self-gifting likelihood in relation to the goal setting process (Figure 3). This model encompasses the goal setting process through which the result of the outcome may drive reward self-gifting behaviour, although this is shown to occur at any time point. The value of this model is in how likelihood to engage in reward self-gifting is shown specifically, as well as the way in which further influential factors relate to self-gifting behaviour. While this requires further research, the logical goal setting process, its impact on reward self-gift likelihood, and the range of variables that may impact likelihood to self-gift are presented in a format which can be explored further, as well as potentially contributing to research across other contexts.

The research also highlighted the addition of new areas, namely the concept of ‘Pre-gifting’. This contribution to the literature sheds light on the timing at which self-gifting behaviour

may occur, rather than exclusively after the fact - how SGCB has generally been discussed in the literature until this point. Pre-gifting relates to purchasing a self-gift prior to beginning work toward achieving a goal, or prior to the final outcome of the goal attempt (either success or failure). This time frame gives an option for further research investigation that can contribute knowledge to time-period specific self-gifting behaviours, and what the implications are for academia, as well as in practice.

Further academic implications are linked to the themes of Tools of the Trade and Earning the Gift, as their exploration is likely to provide information related to motivation, feelings of deservingness, and the differences in viewpoints between individuals. In relation to the context of physical activity, these themes are new and consequently have limited theoretical background, limiting their understanding at this point. Similarly, social comparison within the field of self-gifting requires further investigation to gather insight, due to potential links to the notion that gifts themselves (in a reward context) may be a source of feedback for the goal setting process and subsequent feedback loop. In this way, self-gifts may be seen as feedback after goal success, likely to restart the goal setting process, providing viable opportunities for self-gifting simultaneously. Further research should seek to explore the relationship with cognitive dissonance or other potential implications of receiving negative feedback on reward self-gifts, due to their highly contextual nature.

5.4 Practical Implications

Along with implications for academia, several practical implications can be observed due to the nature of the findings. Conducive with prior socioeconomic research, the findings provide demographic specifications for target markets that marketing or promotional activity utilising a self-gifting-oriented theme (e.g. deserving) may be able to utilise to maximise their return on investment. For example, as older consumers are less likely to self-gift regardless of context, using self-gift oriented messaging is unlikely to be successful.

As evidenced in the model provided (Figure 3), the occasions where opportunity to self-gift arise can be at any point throughout the goal setting process. This aspect can further be utilised when planning marketing activity accordingly, specifically short term marketing tactics targeted at specific stages of the goal setting process. For example, at the end of a

race, goal success is impacting significantly on emotions, and this time period may also relate to the restart of the goal setting process. Beginning work towards another goal creates opportunities for incremental self-gifting, thus promoting brands/products at these extremely emotive times may prove successful for businesses. Themes from the research can be utilised further in this instance as well, for example relating to those that felt unsuccessful compared to others (Social Comparison) even though they worked hard toward the goal (Earning the Gift) may effectively target groups where products that are associated with a therapy context, or seen as motivational for further goal attempts can be provided.

Sponsorship is a highly versatile method of communication, capable of achieving a variety of objectives, largely in terms of communication effects, with a diversity of corporate publics (Meenaghan & Shipley, 1999). Further, linking to events has been shown to provide brand building benefits for corporate sponsors, including enhanced brand associations, improved competitive positions, positive consumer feelings, and increased brand engagement (Becker-Olsen & Hill, 2006). Recently, Carnevale et al. (2014) suggested that marketers might target consumers with low self-brand connection more effectively by emphasizing specific motivations to purchase indulgent self-gifts when they design their ad campaigns and brand positioning strategies. This relates to Escalas and Bettman (2003) research that shows some consumers may form meaningful and personal connections between themselves and a given brand that the brand itself is somehow closely associated with the individual's self. Becoming a brand that is equated with the consumer's desired self has a wide range of potential benefits, inclusive of brand loyalty. Brand identity has been found to have significant direct and indirect effects on traditional antecedents of brand loyalty (He, Li, & Harris, 2012). Further, support for particular brands due to their perception in relation to identity was specifically mentioned in the research. This shows the importance of targeting consumers more effectively and efficiently, such as sponsoring events related to consumer's goals.

Commandeering attention from the intended target market (e.g. first time runners) at the beginning of their goal setting process is likely to be beneficial for any company looking to become a preferred brand and build a relationship with consumers. The strength of Goal Importance and Commitment after the point at which the goal is set is a crucial period in terms of motivation, with potential for SGCB as exhibited by the concept of Pre-gifting. The

specialness of self-gifts is important in a commercial sense, as the hedonic nature they provide to the individual ties into self-identity. Research has shown that self-identity may be confirmed by presenting it to others in the objectified form of a gift (Sherry, 1983) in an interpersonal context, and Mick and DeMoss (1990b) included and identity themes as well as self-esteem in their discussion of the communication dimension of self-gifts. Thus, if an individual identifies with a brand at the beginning of their journey, the specialness and relation to self-identity may increase future purchase and brand loyalty. Brands can target consumers at this early stage with the intention of encouraging trial of their products, as they may continue to use and purchase them throughout the rest of their journey. This could be implemented by partnering with groups such as *Extra Mile Runners* who exhibit an expert reputation.

5.5 Limitations

Due to a variety of constraints including resource and finances, oftentimes there are limitations on research that may or may not influence the outcome. In regards to constraint on resources, while the sample size of 14 is an appropriate amount (Guest et al., 2006) and has yielded useful data, as the study is exploratory in nature a larger amount of interview participants would have been able to provide further, potentially more in-depth information. Financial constraints were implicated in this way as well, as all individuals that were interviewed received incentives in return for their participation. Continuing to incentivise a larger sample would have been a financially unviable option.

Extra Mile Runners has a strong standing in the community, but there may be other groups that operate in a different manner that would have provided different outcomes. The sample itself was well-representative of the group; however it is unknown whether this group of runners was indicative of the running community at large. In terms of recruitment, the group was self-selected via the use of a third party. As part of the process, the entire database of *Extra Mile Runners* was exposed to the intention of this research and the areas of interest. In this way, those that self-selected in may have been more predisposed to self-gifting behaviour than most, as they already identified with the topic. While this is unlikely to alter the relevancy of the data collected, it may have implications regarding a lack of understanding of why self-gifts may not be purchased, as these individuals could have been excluded from the

study unintentionally. These individuals may have self-selected out, removing the potential to provide rich information around alternative theories. In addition, the financial investment required to enrol in the Extra Mile group may have been an excluding factor for some individuals, and thus the sample may not represent a variety of incomes, or opinions as a result. This is of particular importance as the impact of socioeconomic factors was often mentioned as influencing ability to self-gift. Finally, utilising a sample that did not come from an organised running group may have also had an impact on the findings, similar to the selection of a physical context - an alternative to running or physical activity overall may have varied findings.

Previous research has shown that authors who have researched self-gifting behaviour have called for further investigation (e.g. Mick and Faure 1998) using more interpretive and qualitative methodologies, due to the highly subjective nature of SGCB (Mick and DeMoss 1990a, 1990b). This has been adhered to, however the limitations here are expressed by Hopf (2004) who believes ensuring data quality is a major challenge when a project is based upon semi-structured interviews. The onus is on the researcher to provide new data and insight utilising qualitative methods, and a limiting factor due to the subjectivity of interpretation based on the individual researcher occurs as a result. While every effort has been made to ensure data has been assessed without bias, the only way to ensure that there has been no influence from the researcher as an individual is to benchmark the themes using another researcher. This method could be used in further research to improve credibility, transferability, confirmability and dependability of the data collected.

5.6 Future Research Direction

The value of this study is in the contribution to the literature, as mentioned above. Further, the intention was to provide insight into an area with little prior research that could be used as a platform for research in the future. In line with these statements, future research directions are outlined below. In regards to the self-gifting process, the contributions in this area relate almost exclusively to reward self-gifts. What requires further research is whether the outcome of reward context was due to the physical nature of the goals set by these individuals, or an alternate factor. Implementing similar research in regard to the therapy context would also provide further information and bring to light reasons why self-gift likelihood may be altered

in a therapeutic context, and to what extent elements such as goal setting influence this process. For example, investigating the outcome of goal failure more specifically may shed light on therapeutic self-gift likelihood.

The goal setting process is an aspect of this investigation that has received a large amount of attention prior to this study. What is not known is whether self-gifts can act as feedback in the goal setting process. The implication here is for the feedback loop, and what may occur if negative feedback is given. The evidence suggests that self-gifts may be able to function as feedback, as they motivate individuals to strive for loftier goals and are a source of motivation that can be predetermined and personally significant. This may relate to Attribution Theory in that there is a tendency to exert more or less effort at work (in an organisational context) depending on the attributions made about one's prior performance (Faure & Mick, 1993; Sujon, 1986). Feedback is important to understand due to the implications for continuing the goal setting process. Linking the influence of self-gifts to the reiteration of this process is a way of providing valuable insight for this field of research.

Further valuable areas for future research lie with the investigation of the major themes that emerged from the study. For instance, Social Comparison and the influence it has on self-gift likelihood over the goal setting process requires further investigation to decipher to what extent this influence occurs, and how it manages to influence behaviour as a result. Similarly, Goal Importance and Commitment are areas in which context may be influential and commitment to goals may occur in a different manner in alternative contexts, beyond physical activity. Earning the Gift requires further attention due to the strength of this relationship with likelihood to self-gift. Investigating this theme outside of the context of physical activity would provide a more holistic view of how this factor impacts behaviour, and whether the impact of this theme was due to the literal physical nature of the goals that were set.

Themes such as socioeconomic influence require minimal further investigation as knowledge exists in this area and has been supported with the evidence from this study. Due to the limited number of older participants, this demographic may require further investigation to confirm findings around this age bracket. Further, with no men included in the research, there

is value in including men in research to discover differences or similarities between genders. This would broaden the scope of knowledge as well as the practical use for this research, as investigation in this area has almost exclusively focussed on females (Luomala & Laaksonen, 1999; Mick et al., 1992). Further research into these fields could have wide-ranging implications for both academic and practical areas.

5.7 Conclusion

This study contributed a model of self-gifting likelihood in a reward context in relation to the goal setting process, a conceptualisation of which is yet to appear in literature. The model exhibited in the previous chapter outlines the goal setting process from the time at which the goal is set to the eventual outcome. The majority of interview participants experienced goal successes which led to an increase in likelihood of self-gifting behaviour. Feedback (from a range of sources, including self-gifts) at this point is likely to drive further goal setting, also shown in the model. This conceptualisation encompasses the time periods at which self-gifting behaviour is likely to occur, showing that this behaviour (particularly in regard to reward self-gifts) can occur at any stage in the process and is not limited to after the goal outcome. Consequently, the factors that were shown to influence likelihood to self-gift can also impact any stage of the process and include: Social Comparison, Tools of the Trade, Socioeconomic Influence, Goal Commitment and Importance, and Earning the Gift.

In regards to the research questions initially set; goal setting and attempt were found to influence individuals' likelihood to self-gift, evidence of which was found in the prevalence of instances in which participants admitted to engaging in this behaviour. The sheer frequency with which they rewarded themselves, combined with the physical activity specific nature of their gifts and justification methods implies that there was influence here as a result. Further, this was linked to the nature of the goal and the subsequent influence on self-gifting behaviour that was also found. As mentioned, individuals intentionally purchased self-gifts specific to the physical activity context, such as shoes and running apparel. The nature of the reward in the majority of cases also meant that they felt these gifts were deserved, which may be due in part to physically working towards this type of goal. Finally, goal commitment and importance were found to impact on individuals' self-gifting behaviour due to the difference in SGCB between those with different abilities. Beginners in comparison with more

experienced runners showed that those with higher Goal Importance (e.g. beginners completing a race for the first time) tended to reward themselves more frequently and with different purchase behaviours than those for which these events were more commonplace. This led to the development of the theme Tools of the Trade.

Overall, this study was successful in its intention and provided insight that was previously unknown, as well as uncovering prime areas for further investigation to develop the field in a more holistic sense. The use of thematic analysis enabled the exploratory nature of the research process to best highlight prevalent themes from the semi-structured interviews. The data contributes to an area that has at times been overlooked, and it is hoped that further research will occur as a result of this study. Gift giving is of enormous importance amongst societies, and a greater understanding will allow researchers to utilise knowledge for practical as well as academic ventures.

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Appendices

1. Appendix 1: Information Sheet for Interview Participants



Information Sheet

Department of Marketing and Entrepreneurship, College of Business & Law
 Email: georgia.vantongeren@pg.canterbury.ac.nz
 Date: 3/7/2014

Exploring Self-Gifting Behaviour in Individuals Setting Physical Goals Information Sheet for Participants

My name is Georgia and I am a Masters of Commerce student at the University of Canterbury. The purpose of this research is to inform my thesis that will be completed for the course. The area I am interested in is self-gifting (the action of buying things for yourself) in the context of physical activity, and how goal setting and attempt may or may impact this behaviour.

You are invited to participate as a subject in this research project, your role requiring an interview of approximately one hour to discuss the topics of self-gifting behaviours, goal setting, and running and your involvement with the sport. No subsequent tasks are required. You may receive a copy of the project results by contacting the researcher at the conclusion of the project.

With your permission the interview will be audio recorded, however your name and identity will be removed and not disclosed. Participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw at any stage without penalty. If you withdraw, I will remove information relating to you, however once the thesis is published (at latest March 2015) then removal will be impossible. The results of the project may be published, but you may be assured of the complete confidentiality of data gathered in this investigation: your identity will not be made public without your prior consent. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, audio recording and interview transcripts will be coded so your name will not be included in the findings. Only the researcher and supervisor will be privy to this information. Data will be stored on a password protected computer and destroyed after 7 years. A thesis is a public document and will be available through the UC Library.

This project is being carried out as a requirement for my Master of Commerce degree, by Georgia Van Tongeren under the supervision of Paul Ballantine who can be contacted at paul.ballantine@canterbury.ac.nz to discuss any concerns you may have.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee, and participants should address any complaints to:

The Chair, Human Ethics Committee, University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch (human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz).

If you agree to participate in the study, you are asked to complete the consent form and return it in person or via email.

Thank you for your time,
 Georgia Van Tongeren

2. Appendix 2: Consent Form for Interview Participants



Consent Form

Department of Marketing and Entrepreneurship, College of Business & Law
 Email: georgia.vantongeren@pg.canterbury.ac.nz
 Date: 3/7/2014

Researcher: **Georgia Van Tongeren**
 Supervisor: **Paul Ballantine** (paul.ballantine@canterbury.ac.nz)

Exploring Self-Gifting Behaviour in Individuals Setting Physical Goals Consent Form for Participants in the Study

I have been given a full explanation of this project and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I have read and understood the description of the above-named project in the Information Sheet provided

I understand that participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time without penalty. Withdrawal of participation will also include the withdrawal of any information I have provided should this remain practically achievable.

I understand that any information or opinions I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher and supervisor, and that any published or reported results will not identify the participants. I understand that I am able to receive a report on the findings of the study by contacting the researcher at the conclusion of the project.

I understand that a thesis is a public document and will be available through the UC Library. I understand that all data collected for the study will be kept in locked and secure facilities and/or in password protected electronic form and will be destroyed after seven years.

I understand the risks associated with taking part and how they will be managed.

I understand that I can contact the researcher Georgia Van Tongeren at georgia.vantongeren@pg.canterbury.ac.nz or supervisor Paul Ballantine at paul.ballantine@canterbury.ac.nz for further information.

If I have any complaints, I can contact the Chair of the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch (human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz)

By signing below, I agree to participate in this research project. I will return this consent form to Georgia Van Tongeren in person or via email at georgia.vantongeren@pg.canterbury.ac.nz

DATE:

NAME: _____

SIGNATURE: _____

Thank you for your time,
 Georgia Van Tongeren
 georgia.vantongeren@pg.canterbury.ac.nz

3. Appendix 3: *Interview Run Sheet*

Interview Run Sheet

Ice breaker: How did you get into extra mile runners?

Background to exercise: How did you feel about running prior to this? Were you exercising before you joined up?

Goals

- What was your original goal?
- Do you think this changed over the course of the program?
- Is goal setting something you normally do in your everyday life?

Achievement

- How did you feel when you finished the race?
- How do you imagine you will feel when you complete [upcoming race]?

Self-gifting

- If you had to explain the term self-gift to a stranger, what does it mean to you?
- Is there anything you can think of that you may term self-gift that you've bought in the past?
- Why do you think this was?
- Do you think this is something you normally do?

Physical Activity Self-Gifting

- If we think about running, do you think you ever did this when you were training or competing?
- Before? During? After?
- What kind of things do you normally buy?
- Do you have anything you are thinking of buying?

Future

- Do you have anything in mind if you [complete race]?
- In the future, if you've reached your goal, do you think you would buy something? What?

4. Appendix 4: Human Ethics Confirmation



HUMAN ETHICS COMMITTEE

Secretary, Lynda Griffioen
Email: human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz

Ref: HEC 2014/40/LR

9 July 2014

Georgia van Tongeren
Department of Management, Marketing & Entrepreneurship
UNIVERSITY OF CANTERBURY

Dear Georgia

Thank you for forwarding your Human Ethics Committee Low Risk application for your research proposal "Exploring self-gifting behaviour in individuals setting physical goals".

I am pleased to advise that this application has been reviewed and I confirm support of the Department's approval for this project.

Please note that this approval is subject to the incorporation of the amendments you have provided in your emails of 3 and 4 July 2014.

With best wishes for your project.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. MacDonald'.

Lindsey MacDonald
Chair, Human Ethics Committee